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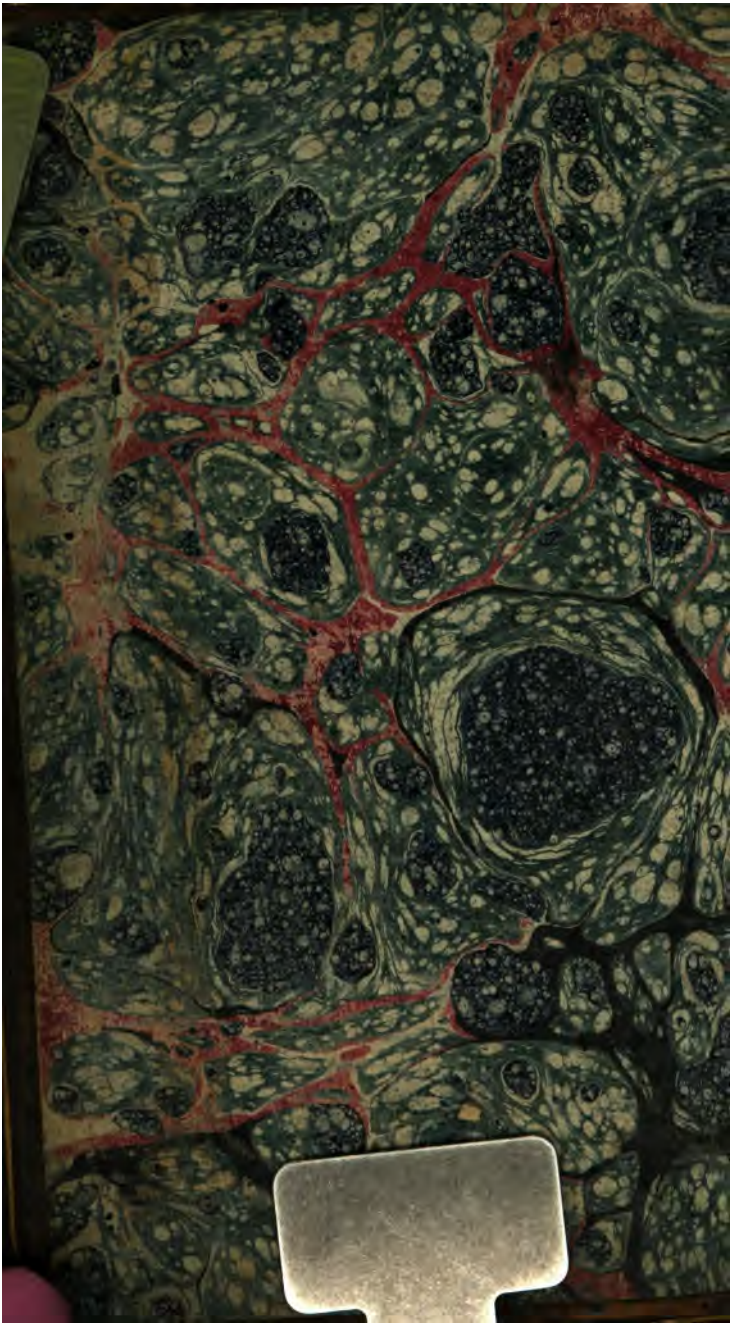

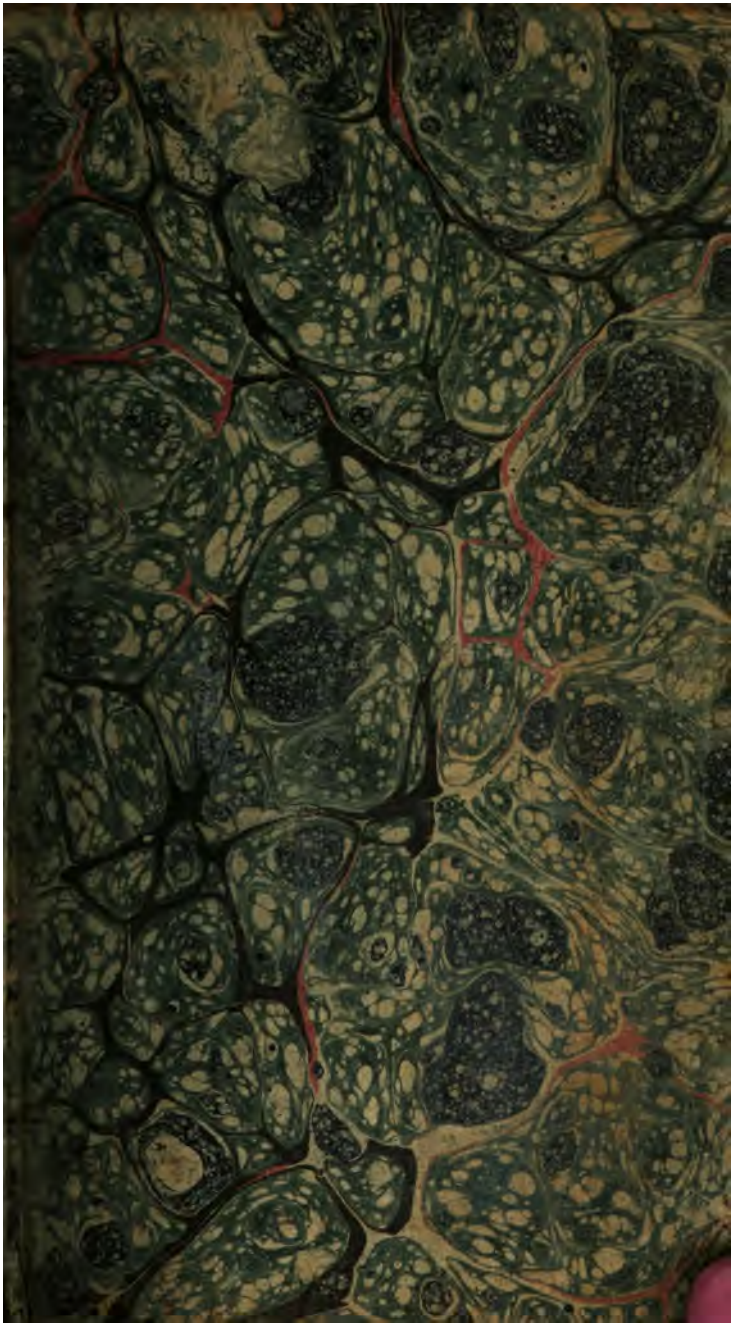

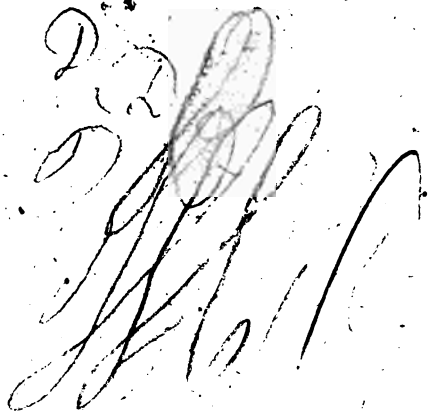

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A

TOUR

THROUGH

SICILY AND MALTA,

IN A

SERIES OF LETTERS

TO

WILLIAM BECKFORD, ESQ.

OF SOMERLY IN SUFFOLK;

FROM

P. BRYDONE, F.R.S.

EDINBURGH:

Printed by Abernethy & Walker,

FOR VERNOR, HOOD & SHARPE, LONDON.

1809.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

HAD there been any book in our language on the subject of the following Letters, they never should have seen the light. The Author wrote them for the amusement of his friends, and as an assistance to his memory; and if it will in any degree apologize for their imperfections, he can with truth declare that they never were intended for publication: nor indeed was that idea suggested to him, till long after they were written. One principal motive he will own, was the desire of giving to the world, and perhaps of transmitting to posterity, a monument of his friendship with the gentleman to whom they are addressed.

When Mr Forster's translation of Baron Riedesel's book first appeared, these Letters were already in the press, and the author apprehended an anticipation of his subject; however, on perusal, he had the satisfaction to find, that the two works did not much interfere.

In transcribing them for the press, he found it necessary both to retrench and to amplify; by which the ease of the epistolary style has probably suffered, and some of the letters have been extended much beyond their original length.

He now presents them to the public with the greatest diffidence; hoping that some allowance will be made for the very inconvenient circumstances, little favourable to order or precision, in which many of them were written: but he would not venture to new-model them; apprehending, that what they might gain in form and expression, they would probably lose in ease and simplicity; and well knowing that the original impressions are better described at the moment they are felt, than from the most exact recollection.

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A

TOUR

THROUGH

SICILY AND MALTA.

LETTER I.

Naples, May 14. 1770.

DEAR BECKFORD,

I REMEMBER to have heard you regret, that in all your peregrinations through Europe, you had ever neglected the island of Sicily; and had spent much of your time in running over the old beaten tract, and in examining the thread-bare subjects of Italy and France; when probably there were a variety of objects not less interesting that still lay buried in oblivion in that celebrated island. We intend to profit from this hint of yours.—Fullarton has been urging me to it with all that ardour, which a new prospect of acquiring knowledge ever inspires in him; and Glover, your old acquaintance, has promised to accompany us.

The Italians represent it as impossible: as there are no inns in the island, and many of the roads are over

dangerous precipices, or through bogs, and forests, infested with the most resolute and daring banditti in Europe. However, all these considerations, formidable as they may appear, did not deter Mr Hamilton *, his lady, and Lord Fortrose †. They made this expedition last summer; and returned so much delighted with it, that they have animated us with the strongest desire of enjoying the same pleasure.

Our first plan was to go by land to Regium, and from thence, cross over to Messina; but on making exact inquiry, with regard to the state of the country, and method of travelling, we find that the danger from the banditti in Calabria and Apulia is so great, the accommodation so wretched, and inconveniences of every kind so numerous, without any consideration whatever to throw into the opposite scale, that we soon relinquished that scheme; and in spite of all the terrors of Scylla and Charybdis, and the more real terrors of sea-sickness (the most formidable monster of the three), we have determined to go by water; and, that no time may be lost, we have already taken our passage on board an English ship, which is ready to sail with the first fair wind.

Now, as this little expedition has never been considered as any part of this grand tour; and as it will probably present many objects worthy of your attention, not mentioned in any of our books of travels; I flatter myself that a short account of these will not be unacceptable to you, and may in some degree make up for your having neglected to visit them. You may therefore expect to hear of me, from every town where we stop; and when I meet with any deserving of notice, I shall attempt to describe it in as few words as possi-

* Now knight of the bath. † Now Earl of Seaforth.

ble. We have been waiting with impatience for a fair wind, but at present there is little prospect of it. The weather is exceedingly rough, and not a ship has been able to get out of the harbour for upwards of three weeks past. This climate is by no means what we expected to find it; and the serene sky of Italy, so much boasted of by our travelled gentlemen, does not altogether deserve the great eulogiums bestowed upon it. It is now the middle of May, and we have not as yet had any continuance of what may be called fine weather. It has, indeed, been abundantly warm, but seldom a day has passed without sudden storms of wind and rain, which render walking out here to the full as dangerous to our invalids, as it is in England.

I am persuaded that our physicians are under some mistake with regard to this climate. It is certainly one of the warmest in Italy; but it is as certainly one of the most inconstant, and, from what we have observed, disagrees with the greatest part of our valetudinarians; but more particularly with the gouty people, who have all found themselves better at Rome; which, though much colder in winter, is, I believe, a healthier climate. Naples, to be sure, is more eligible in summer, as the air is constantly refreshed by the sea breeze, when Rome is often scorched by the most insupportable heat. Last summer, Fahrenheit's thermometer never rose higher at Naples than seventy-six. At Rome it was eighty-nine. The difference is often still more considerable. In winter it is not less remarkable. Here, our greatest degree of cold was in the end of January; the thermometer stood at thirty-six; at Rome it fell to twenty-seven; so that the distance between the two extremes of heat and cold last year at Naples, was only forty degrees; whereas at Rome it was no less than sixty-two.

Yet, by all accounts, their winter was much more agreeable and healthy than ours: for they had clear frosty weather, whilst we were deluged with rains, accompanied with very high wind. The people here assure us, that in some seasons it has rained every day for six or seven weeks. But the most disagreeable part of the Neapolitan climate is the sirocc or south-east wind, which is very common at this season. It is infinitely more relaxing, and gives the vapours in a much higher degree, than the worst of our rainy Novembers. It has now blown for these seven days without intermission; and has indeed blown away all our gaiety and spirits; and if it continues much longer, I do not know what may be the consequence. It gives a degree of lassitude, both to the body and mind, that renders them absolutely incapable of performing their usual functions. It is not perhaps surprising, that it should produce these effects on a phlegmatic English constitution; but we have just now an instance, that all the mercury of France must sink under the load of this horrid, leaden atmosphere. A smart Parisian marquis came here about ten days ago: he was so full of animal spirits that the people thought him mad. He never remained a moment in the same place; but, at their grave conversations, used to skip from room to room with such amazing elasticity, that the Italians swore that he had got springs in his shoes. I met him this morning, walking with the step of a philosopher; a smelling bottle in his hand, and all his vivacity extinguished. I asked him what was the matter? "Ah! mon ami," said he, "je m'ennui à la mort;—moi, qui n'ai jamais sçu l'ennui. Mais cet execrable vent m'accable: et deux jours de plus, et je me pend."

The natives themselves do not suffer less than stran-

gers; and all nature seems to languish during this abominable wind. A Neapolitan lover avoids his mistress with the utmost care in the time of the sirocc; and the indolence it inspires is almost sufficient to extinguish every passion. All works of genius are laid aside during its continuance; and when any thing very flat or insipid is produced, the strongest phrase of disapprobation they can bestow is, "Era scritto in tempo dell sirocco;" that it was writ in the time of the sirocc. I shall make no apology for this letter; and whenever I happen to tire you, be kind enough to remember (pray do) that it is not me you are to blame, but the sirocc wind. This will put me much at my ease, and will save us a world of time and apologies.

I have been endeavouring to get some account of the cause of this very singular quality of the sirocc; but the people here seldom think of accounting for any thing, and I do not find, notwithstanding its remarkable effecta, that it has ever yet been an object of inquiry amongst them.

I have not observed that the sirocc makes any remarkable change in the barometer. When it first set in, the mercury fell about a line and a half; and has continued much about the same height ever since; but the thermometer was at forty-three the morning it began, and rose almost immediately to sixty-five; and for these two days past it has been at seventy and seventy-one. However, it is certainly not the warmth of this wind that renders it so oppressive to the spirits; it is rather the want of that genial quality, which is so enlivening, and which even renders the western breeze so agreeable: The spring and elasticity of the air seems to be lost; and that active principle which animates all nature, appears to be dead. This principle we have

supposed to be nothing else than the subtle electric fluid that the air usually contains; and indeed we have found, that during this wind, it appears to be almost annihilated, or at least its activity exceedingly reduced. Yesterday, and to-day, we have been attempting to make some electrical experiments; but I never before found the air so unfavourable for them.

Sea-bathing we have found to be the best antidote against the effects of the sirocc; and this we certainly enjoy in great perfection. Lord Fortrose, who is the soul of our colony here, has provided a large commodious boat for this purpose. We meet every morning at 8 o'clock, and row about half a mile out to sea, where we strip and plunge into the water: were it not for this, we should all of us have been as bad as the French marquis. My lord has ten watermen, who are in reality a sort of amphibious animals, as they live one half of the summer in the sea. Three or four of these generally go in with us, to pick up stragglers, and secure us from all accidents. They dive with ease to the depth of forty, and sometimes of fifty feet, and bring up quantities of excellent shell-fish during the summer-months; but so great is their devotion, that every time they go down they make the sign of the cross, and mutter an Ave Maria, without which they should certainly be drowned; and were not a little scandalized at us for omitting this ceremony. To accustom us to swimming in all circumstances, my lord has provided a suit of clothes, which we wear by turns; and from a very short practice, we have found it almost as commodious to swim with as without them: we have likewise learned to strip in the water, and find it no very difficult matter: And I am fully persuaded, from being accustomed to this kind of exercise, that in case of ship-

wreck we should have greatly the advantage over those who had never practised it; for it is by the embarrassment from the clothes, and the agitation that people are thrown into, from finding themselves in a situation they had never experienced before, that so many lives are lost in the water.

After bathing, we have an English breakfast at his lordship's; and after breakfast, a delightful little concert, which lasts for an hour and a half. Barbella, the sweetest fiddle in Italy, leads our little band. This party, I think, constitutes one principal part of the pleasure we enjoy at Naples. We have likewise some very agreeable society amongst ourselves, though we cannot boast much of that with the inhabitants. There are, to be sure, many good people among them; but in general, there is so very little analogy betwixt an English and a Neapolitan mind, that the true social harmony, that great sweetener of human life, can seldom be produced. In lieu of this (the exchange you will say is but a bad one) the country round Naples abounds so much in every thing that is curious, both in art and nature, and affords so ample a field of speculation for the naturalist and antiquary, that a person of any curiosity may spend some months here very agreeably, and not without profit.

Besides the discoveries of Herculaneum and Pompeia, which, of themselves, afford a great fund of entertainment, the whole coast that surrounds this beautiful bay, particularly that near Puzzoli, Cuma, Micenum and Baia, is covered with innumerable monuments of Roman magnificence. But, alas! how are the mighty fallen! This delightful coast, once the garden of all Italy, and inhabited only by the rich, the gay, and luxurious, is now abandoned to the poorest and

most miserable of mortals. Perhaps, there is no spot on the globe that has undergone so thorough a change; or that can exhibit so striking a picture of the vanity of human grandeur. Those very walls that once lodged a Cæsar, a Lucullus, an Anthony, the richest and most voluptuous of mankind, are now occupied by the very meanest and most indigent wretches on earth, who are actually starving for want in those very apartments that were the scenes of the greatest luxury. There we are told that suppers were frequently given that cost fifty thousand pounds; and some that even amounted to double that sum.

The luxury indeed of Baia was so great, that it became a proverb, even amongst the luxurious Romans themselves; and, at Rome, we often find them upbraiding with effeminacy and epicurism, those who spent much of their time in this scene of delights; Clodius throws it in Cicero's teeth more than once: And that orator's having purchased a villa here, hurt him not a little in the opinion of the graver and more austere part of the senate. The walls of these palaces still remain, and the poor peasants, in some places, have built up their miserable huts within them; but, at present, there is not one gentleman or man of fashion residing in any part of this country; the former state of which, compared with the present, certainly makes the most striking contrast imaginable. Yesterday we rode over the greatest part of it a-shooting porcupine, a new species of diversion, which I had never heard of before. We killed several of these animals on the Monte Barbaro, the place that formerly produced the Falernian wine, but now a barren waste. I don't know if you are acquainted with this kind of sport. To me, I own, its novelty was its greatest merit; and I would

not at any time give a day of partridge for a month of porcupine shooting. Neither indeed is the flesh of these animals the most delicious in the world, though to-day most of us have dined upon it. It is extremely luscious, and soon palls upon the appetite.

We are now going to lay in our sea-store, as there is some probability that we shall sail in a day or two. ——Farewell—you shall hear from me again at Messina, if we are not swallowed up by Charybdis.

LETTER IV.

On Board the Charming Molly, off the Island of Capre, May 15.

WE have now begun our expedition with every auspicious omen. This morning the melancholy sirocc left us; and in place of it we have gotten a fine brisk tramontane (or North wind), which in a few hours blew away all our vapours, and made us wonder how much the happiness of mankind depends on a blast of wind. After eating a hearty dinner with many of our friends at Mr Walter's, and drinking plentifully of his excellent burgundy, we took leave in the highest spirits. Had the sirocc blown as yesterday, we should probably have been in tears; and not one of us would have suspected that we were crying only because the wind was in the south. We are not apt to suppose it; but probably a great part of our pleasures and pains depend upon such trivial causes, though always ascribed to something else; few people being willing to own themselves like a weathercock, affected by every blast. Indeed we should have naturally imputed it to the grief of parting with that excellent fa-

mily whom you know so well; which no person could ever leave without regret, or see without pleasure; but the agreeable prospect of soon meeting again (probably better qualified to amuse and entertain them) absorbed all melancholy thoughts, and even added to that alacrity, which the delightful tour before us had already inspired.

We sailed at five; and after firing our farewell signals to our friends on shore (whom we discovered with our glasses at some miles distance), we soon found ourselves in the middle of the Bay of Naples, surrounded by the most beautiful scenery in the world. It fell calm for an hour, on purpose to give us time to contemplate all its beauties.

The bay is of a circular figure; in most places upwards of twenty miles in diameter; so that, including all its breaks and inequalities, the circumference is considerably more than sixty miles. The whole of this space is so wonderfully diversified, by all the riches both of art and nature, that there is scarce an object wanting to render the scene complete; and it is hard to say, whether the view is more pleasing from the singularity of many of these objects, or from the incredible variety of the whole. You see an amazing mixture of the ancient and modern; some rising to fame, and some sinking to ruin. Palaces reared over the tops of other palaces, and ancient magnificence trampled under foot—by modern folly.—Mountains and islands, that were celebrated for their fertility, changed into barren wastes, and barren wastes into fertile fields and rich vineyards. Mountains sunk into plains, and plains swelled into mountains. Lakes drunk up by volcanoes, and extinguished volcanoes turned into lakes. The earth still smoking in many places;

and in others throwing out flame.—In short, Nature seems to have formed this coast in her most capricious mood; for every object is a *lusus naturæ*. She never seems to have gone seriously to work; but to have devoted this spot to the most unlimited indulgence of caprice and frolic.

The bay is shut out from the Mediterranean by the island of Capre, so famous for the abode of Augustus; and afterwards so infamous for that of Tiberius. A little to the west lie those of Ischia, Prosida, and Nisida; the celebrated promontory of Micæum, where Æneas landed; the classic fields of Baia, Cuma, and Puzzoli; with all the variety of scenery that formed both the Tartarus and Elysium of the ancients; the Camphi Phlegrei, or burning plains where Jupiter overcame the giants; the Monte Novo, formed of late years by the fire; the Monte Barbaro; the picturesque city of Puzzoli, with the Solfaterra smoking above it; the beautiful promontory of Pausilippe, exhibiting the finest scenery that can be imagined; the great and opulent city of Naples with its three castles, its harbour full of ships from every nation, its palaces, churches, and convents innumerable; the rich country from thence to Portici, covered with noble houses and gardens, and appearing only a continuation of the city; the palace of the king, with many others surrounding it, all built over the roofs of those of Herculaneum, buried near a hundred feet, by the eruptions of Vesuvius; the black fields of lava that have run from that mountain, intermixed with gardens, vineyards, and orchards; Vesuvius itself, in the back ground of the scene, discharging volumes of fire and smoke, and forming a broad track in the air over our heads, extending without being broken or dissipated to

the utmost verge of the horizon; a variety of beautiful towns and villages, round the base of the mountain, thoughtless of the impending ruin that daily threatens them. Some of these are reared over the very roofs of Pompeia and Stabia, where Pliny perished; and with their foundations have pierced through the sacred abodes of the ancient Romans; thousands of whom lie buried here, the victims of this inexorable mountain. Next follows the extensive and romantic coast of Castello Mare, Sorrentum, and Mola; diversified with every picturesque object in nature. It was the study of this wild and beautiful country that formed our greatest landscape painters. This was the school of Poussin and Salvator Rosa, but more particularly of the last, who composed many of his most celebrated pieces from the bold craggy rocks that surround this coast; and no doubt it was from the daily contemplation of these romantic objects, that they stored their minds with that variety of ideas they have communicated to the world with such elegance in their works.

Now, should I tell you this extensive coast, this prodigious variety of mountains, valleys, promontories and islands, covered with an everlasting verdure, and loaded with the richest fruits, is all the produce of subterraneous fire; it would require, I am afraid, too great a stretch of faith to believe me; yet the fact is certain, and can only be doubted by those who have wanted time or curiosity to examine it. It is strange, you will say, that Nature should make use of the same agent to create as to destroy; and that what has only been looked upon as the consumer of countries, is in fact the very power that produces them. Indeed, this part of our earth seems already to have undergone the sentence pronounced upon the whole of it; but, like

the phœnix, has arisen again from its own ashes, in much greater beauty and splendour than before it was consumed. The traces of these dreadful conflagrations are still conspicuous in every corner; they have been violent in their operations, but in the end have proved salutary in their effects. The fire in many places is not extinguished, but Vesuvius is now the only spot where it rages with any degree of activity.

Mr Hamilton, our minister here, who is no less distinguished in the learned, than in the polite world, has lately examined it with a truly philosophic eye, and this is the result of all his observations: however, at present I only sit down to give you an account of the prospect of this singular country, and not to write its natural history, which would lead me into too vast a field; I shall reserve that curious subject till our return, when I shall have more leisure to make you acquainted with it.—I beg therefore you would at least suspend your judgment for the present, and do not condemn me before I am heard.

After contemplating this delightful prospect, till sunset, the wind sprung up again, and we have now almost reached Capre, thirty miles distant from Naples. We have just spoken with an English ship. They tell us, that the Marquis of Carmarthen, Lord Fortrose, and Mr Hamilton, observing the calm, took a boat to make us a visit; but unfortunately mistaking their vessel for ours, we have had the mortification to miss them.

The night is very dark; and Mount Vesuvius is flaming at a dreadful rate; we can observe the red-hot stones thrown to a vast height in the air; and, after their fall, rolling down the side of the mountain. Our ship is going so smooth, that we are scarce sensible of the motion; and if this wind continue, before to-mor-

row night, we shall be in sight of Sicily. Adieu. The captain is making a bowl of grog, and promises us a happy voyage.

16*th*. All wrong—Sick to death—Execrable sirocc wind, and directly contrary—Vile heaving waves—A plague of all sea voyages—That author was surely right, who said, that *land voyages* * were much to be preferred.

17*th* in the morning. For these twenty-four hours past we have been groaning to one another from our beds; execrating the waves, and wishing that we had rather been at the mercy of all the banditti of Calabria. We are now beginning to change our tune. The sirocc is gone, and the wind is considerably fallen; however, we are still three woful figures. Our servants too are sick and as helpless as we. The captain says, that Philip our Sicilian man was frightened out of his wits; and has been praying to St Januarius with all his might. He now thinks he has heard him, and imputes the change of the weather entirely to his interest with his saint.

17*th*. Three o'clock. Weather pleasant and favourable.—A fine breeze since ten;—have just come in sight of Strombolo. Our pilot says it is near twenty leagues off. We have likewise a view of the mountains of Calabria, but at a very great distance. Ship steady; and sea-sickness almost gone.

Eleven at night. The weather is now fine, and we are all well. After spying Strombolo, by degrees we came in sight of the rest of the Lipari islands, and part of the coast of Sicily. These islands are very picturesque, and several of them still emit smoke, particularly Volcano and Volcanello; but none of them, for some ages past, except Strombolo, have made any eruptions of fire. We are just now lying within about three miles

* See *Tour to the East*.

of that curious island, and can see its operations distinctly. It appears to be a volcano of a very different nature from Vesuvius, the explosions of which succeed one another with some degree of regularity, and have no great variety of duration. Now I have been observing Strombolo, ever since it fell dark, with a good deal of pleasure, but not without some degree of perplexity, as I cannot account for its variety. Sometimes its explosions resemble those of Vesuvius, and the light seems only to be occasioned by the quantity of fiery stones thrown into the air; and as soon as these have fallen down, it appears to be extinguished, till another explosion causes a fresh illumination: This I have always observed to be the case with Vesuvius; except when the lava has risen to the summit of the mountain, and continued without variety to illuminate the air around it.—The light from Strombolo evidently depends on some other cause. Sometimes a clear red flame issues from the crater of the mountain, and continues to blaze without interruption, for near the space of half an hour. The fire is of a different colour from the explosions of stones, and is evidently produced from a different cause. It would seem as if some inflammable substance were suddenly kindled up in the bowels of the mountain. It is attended with no noise, nor explosion that we are sensible of. It has now fallen calm, and we shall probably have an opportunity of examining this volcano more minutely to-morrow. We were told at Naples that it had lately made a violent eruption, and had begun to form a new island at some little distance from the old; which piece of intelligence was one of our great inducements to this expedition. We think we have discovered this island, as we have observed several times the appearance of a small flame arising

out of the sea, a little to the south-west of Strombolo; and suppose it must have issued from this new island; but it is possible this light may come from the lower part of the island of Strombolo itself. We shall see to-morrow.

18*th*. We are still off Strombolo, but unfortunately at present it intercepts the view of that spot from whence we observed the flame to arise, and we can see no appearance of any new island, nor indeed of any lava that has of late sprung from the old one. We have a distinct view of the crater of Strombolo, which seems to be different from Vesuvius, and all the old volcanoes that surround Naples. Of these, the craters are without exception in the centre, and form the highest part of the mountain. That of Strombolo is on its side, and not within two hundred yards of its summit. From the crater to the sea, the island is entirely composed of the same sort of ashes and burnt matter as the conical part of Vesuvius: and the quantity of this matter is perpetually increasing, from the uninterrupted discharge from the mountain; for of all the volcanoes we read of, Strombolo seems to be the only one that burns without ceasing. Ætna and Vesuvius often lie quiet for many months, even years, without the least appearance of fire, but Strombolo is ever at work, and for ages past has been looked upon as the great light-house of these seas.

It is truly wonderful, how such a constant and immense fire is maintained for thousands of years, in the midst of the ocean! That of the other Lipari islands seems now almost extinct, and the force of the whole to be concentered in Strombolo, which acts as one great vent to them all. We still observe Volcano and Volcanello throwing out volumes of smoke, but during the whole night we could not perceive the least spark of fire from either of them.

It is probable, that Strombolo, as well as all the rest of these islands, is originally the work of subterraneous fire. The matter of which they are composed, in a manner demonstrates this; and many of the Sicilian authors confirm it. There are now eleven of them in all; and none of the ancients mention more than seven. Fazello, one of the best Sicilian authors, gives an account of the production of Volcano, now one of the most considerable of these islands. He says it happened in the early time of the republic, and is recorded by Eusebius, Pliny and others. He adds, that even in his time, in the beginning of the sixteenth century, it still discharged quantities of fire and of pumice stones; but that in the preceding century, in the year 1444, on the 5th of February, there had been a very great eruption of this island, which shook all Sicily, and alarmed the coast of Italy as far as Naples. He says the sea boiled all around the island, and rocks of a vast size were discharged from the crater; that fire and smoke in many places pierced through the waves, and that the navigation amongst these islands was totally changed; rocks appearing where it was formerly deep water; and many of the straits and shallows were entirely filled up. He observes, that Aristotle, in his book on meteors, takes notice of a very early eruption of this island, by which not only the coast of Sicily, but likewise many cities in Italy were covered with ashes. It has probably been that very eruption which formed the island. He describes Strombolo to have been, in his time, pretty much the same as at this day; only that it then produced a great quantity of cotton, which is not now the case. The greatest part of it appears to be barren. On the north side there are a few vineyards; but they are very meagre: opposite to these, there is a rock at some

distance from land; it seems to be entirely of lava, and is not less than fifty or sixty feet above the water.

The whole island of Strombolo is a mountain that rises suddenly from the sea; it is about ten miles round, and is not of the exact conical form supposed common to all volcanoes. We were determined to have landed on the island, and to have attempted to examine the volcano: but our Sicilian pilot assures us, that the crater is not only inaccessible (which indeed I own it appears to be) but that we shall likewise be obliged to perform a quarantine of forty-eight hours at Messina; and that besides, we should run a great risk of being attacked by the natives, who are little better than savages, and always on the alarm against the Turks.—On weighing these reasons, and putting the question, it was carried, to proceed on our voyage.

I own it is with much regret that I leave this curious island, without being better acquainted with it. I have been looking with a good glass all round, but can see no marks of the eruption we heard so much of at Naples: indeed, the south-west part, where we saw the appearance of fire, is still hid from us by the interposition of the island; and if there has been an eruption, it was certainly on that side: it is probable we shall never be able to learn whether there has been one or not; or at least to make ourselves masters of any of the particulars relating to it; for events of that kind do not make such a noise in this ignorant and indolent country, as the blowing of an aloe, or a gooseberry-bush at Christmas, does in England. Strombolo rises to a great height: our pilot says, higher than Vesuvius; but I think he is mistaken. Both the captain and he agree, that in clear weather it is discoverable at the distance of twenty-five leagues; and that at night its flames are

to be seen still much farther; so that its visible horizon cannot be less than five hundred miles, which will require a very considerable elevation.

The revenue these islands bring to the King of Naples is by no means inconsiderable. They produce great quantities of alum, sulphur, nitre, cinnabar, and most sorts of fruits, particularly raisins, currants, and figs in great perfection; some of their wines are likewise much esteemed; particularly the Malvasia, well known all over Europe.

The island of Lipari (from which all the rest take the name) is by much the largest, as well as the most fertile. By the description of Aristotle, it appears that it was in his time, what Strombolo is in ours, considered by sailors as a light-house, as its fires were never extinguished. It has not suffered from subterraneous fires for many ages past, though it every where bears the marks of its former state. This is the island supposed by Virgil (who is one of our travelling companions) to be the habitation of Æolus; but indeed all of them were formerly called Æolian. As they were full of vast caverns, roaring with internal fires, poets feigned that Æolus kept the winds prisoners here, and let them out at his pleasure. This allegorical fiction is of great use both to Virgil and Homer, when they want to make a storm, and forms no inconsiderable part of their machinery. A goddess has nothing to do but to take a flight to the Lipari islands, and Æolus, who was the very pink of courtesy, has always a storm ready at her command.

Homer, indeed, departing sadly from his usual dignity, supposes that Æolus kept the winds here, each tied up in their respective bags; and when any particular wind was demanded, he made them a present of

a bag full of it, to use at discretion. Some of the ancient historians (Diodorus, I think) says that this fable took its rise from a wise king named Æolus; who, from observing the smoke of these islands, and other phenomena attending them, had learned to foretell the weather; and from thence was said to have the command of the winds.

The forge of Vulcan too has been supposed by the poets to be placed in Hiera, one of these islands. Virgil sends him here, to make the celestial armour for Æneas, and gives a noble description of this gloomy habitation *, where he found the Cyclops busy forging a thunderbolt for Jupiter; the account of which is very singular †. This island is now called Volcano, the same that is recorded to have been produced by fire in the time of the republic. So that Virgil commits here a very great anachronism, in sending Vulcan to a place which [illegible] time did not exist, nor for many ages after. But this bold poetical licence he amply repays us for, by the fine description he gives of it. These islands, he says, were called Volcanian as well as Æolian:

"Volcani domus, et Volcania nomine tellus."

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* Amid the Hesperian and Sicilian flood
All black with smoke, a rocky island stood,
The dark Vulcanian land, the region of the god.
Here the grim Cyclops ply in vaults profound,
The huge Æolian forge that thunders round.
The eternal anvils ring the dungeon o'er;
From side to side the fiery caverns roar, &c.

† Beneath their hands, tremendous to survey!
Half round, half formed, the dreadful engine lay.
Three points of rain; three forks of hail conspire;
Three armed with wind, and three were barb'd with fire;
The mass they temper'd thick with livid rays,
Fear, wrath, and terror, and the lightning's blaze.

PITT.

So that the change of the name from Hiera to Volcano was a very natural one. This is the island that Pliny calls Terasia; and both Strabo and he give an account of its productions.

19*th*. Found ourselves within half a mile of the coast of Sicily, which is low, but finely variegated. The opposite coast of Calabria is very high, and the mountains are covered with the finest verdure. It was almost a dead calm, our ship scarce moving half a mile in an hour, so that we had time to get a complete view of the famous rock of Scylla, on the Calabrian side, Cape Pylorus on the Sicilian, and the celebrated Straits of the Faro that runs between them. Whilst we were still some miles distant from the entry of the Straits, we heard the roaring of the current, like the noise of some large impetuous river confined between narrow banks. This increased in proportion as we advanced, till we saw the water in many places raised to a considerable height, and forming large eddies, or whirlpools. The sea in every other place was as smooth as glass. Our old pilot told us, that he had often seen ships caught in these eddies, and whirled about with great rapidity, without obeying the helm in the smallest degree. When the weather is calm, there is little danger; but when the waves meet with this violent current, it makes a dreadful sea. He says that there were five ships wrecked in this spot last winter. We observed that the current set exactly for the rock of Scylla, and would infallibly have carried any thing thrown into it against that point; so that it was not without reason the ancients have painted it as an object of such terror. It is about a mile from the entry of the Faro, and forms a small promontory, which runs a little out to sea, and meets the whole force of the waters, as they

come out of the narrowest part of the Straits. The head of this promontory is the famous Scylla. It must be owned that it does not altogether come up to the formidable description that Homer gives of it; the reading which (like that of Shakespear's Cliff) almost makes one's head giddy. Neither is the passage so wonderous narrow and difficult as he makes it. Indeed it is probable that the breadth of it is greatly increased since his time by the violent impetuosity of the current. And this violence too must have always diminished, in proportion as the breadth of the channel increased.

Our pilot says, there are many small rocks that shew their heads near the base of the large ones. These are probably the dogs that are described as howling round the monster Scylla. There are likewise many caverns that add greatly to the noise of the water, and tend still to increase the horror of the scene. The rock is near 200 feet high. There is a kind of castle or fort built on its summit; and the town of Scylla, or Sciglio, containing three or four hundred inhabitants, stands on its south side, and gives the title of prince to a Calabrese family.

As the current was directly against us, we were obliged to lie to, for some hours, till it turned. The motion of the water ceased for some time, but in a few minutes it began in the opposite direction, though not with such violence. We lay just opposite to Cape Pelorus; (where the light-house is now built.) It is said to have been thus named by Hannibal, in recompence to Pelorus, his pilot, for having put him to death on this spot, on a false suspicion of his wanting to betray him: For seeing himself land-locked on all sides, he thought there was no escaping, and that Pelorus had been bribed to deliver him up; but as soon as he discovered the

Straits, he repented of his rashness; and some years afterwards erected a statue here in atonement to the manes of Pelorus. Pomponius Mela tells this story; from whence he draws two very wise inferences: That Hannibal must have been extremely passionate; and that he knew nothing at all of geography. Others deny this authority, and say it was named Pelorus from Ulysses' pilot, who was drowned near to this place; but there can be no sort of foundation for this conjecture; for Ulysses' whole crew were drowned at the same time, and he himself was driven through these Straits, mounted on the broken mast of his ship. It is like most disputes among antiquaries, a matter of mighty little consequence; and I leave you at full liberty to choose which of the two accounts you please.

From hence we had an opportunity of observing a pretty large portion of Calabria, which formerly constituted a considerable part of that celebrated country known by the name of Great Greece, and looked upon as one of the most fertile in the empire. These beautiful hills and mountains are covered with trees and brush-wood to the very summit; and appear pretty much in the same state as some of the wilds of America that are just beginning to be cultivated. Some little spots where the woods are cleared away, just serve to shew the natural fertility of the soil; and what this country might soon be brought to, were industry and population encouraged; but it still remains a good deal in the same situation as when the barbarous nations left it; and I believe it is hard to say, whether their tyranny or that of Spain has been the most oppressive. After the invasion of those nations, and during the time of the dark and barbarous ages, this country (like many others) from the highest state of culture and civiliza-

tion, became a wild and barren wilderness, overgrown with thickets and forests: and indeed, since the revival of arts and agriculture, perhaps of all Europe this is the country that has profited the least; retaining still, both in the wildness of its fields and ferocity of its inhabitants, more of the Gothic barbarity than is to be met with any where else. Some of these forests are of a vast extent, and absolutely impenetrable; and no doubt conceal in their thickets many valuable monuments of its ancient magnificence. Of this indeed we have a very recent proof in the discovery of Pestum, a Grecian city, that had not been heard of for many ages; till of late some of its lofty temples were seen, peeping over the tops of the woods; upbraiding mankind for their shameful neglect; and calling upon them to bring it once more to light. Accordingly curiosity, and the hopes of gain, a still more powerful motive, soon opened a passage, and exposed to view these valuable and respectable relics.—But here it would be out of place to give you an account of them; I shall reserve that till my return.

As soon as our ship entered the current, we were carried along with great velocity towards Messina, which is twelve miles from the entry of the Straits. However, as the passage widens in proportion as you advance, the current of consequence becomes less rapid. At Messina it is four miles broad. At the mouth of the Straits, betwixt the promontories of Pelorus in Sicily, and the Coda de Volpe (or the Fox's Tail) in Calabria, it appears scarcely to be a mile. Most of the ancient writers are of opinion that Sicily was formerly joined to the continent in this spot, and that the separation must have been made by some violent convulsion of the earth. If this is true, which indeed does not ap-

pear improbable, it must have happened far beyond the reach of all historians, as none of them, at least that I have seen, pretend any thing but conjecture for the foundation of their opinion. Indeed Claudian (were credit to be given to poets) says positively,

"Trinacria quondam Italiæ pars una fuit."

And Virgil too, in his third Æneid, tells the same story:

"Hæc loca vi quondam, et vasta convulsa ruina," &c.

Pliny, Strabo, Diodorus, and many others, both historians and philosophers, are of the same sentiments, and pretend that the strata in the opposite sides of the Strait perfectly correspond; like the white rocks near Dover and Boulogne, which have given rise to an opinion of the same kind. However, the similarity in that case is much more striking to the eye at least than in this.

The approach to Messina is the finest that can be imagined; it is not so grand as that of Naples, but it is much more beautiful, and the key exceeds any thing I have yet seen, even in Holland. It is built in the form of a crescent, and is surrounded by a range of magnificent buildings, four stories high, and exactly uniform, for the space of an Italian mile. The street betwixt these and the sea is about an hundred feet wide, and forms one of the most delightful walks in the world. It enjoys the freest air, and commands the most beautiful prospect: it is only exposed to the morning sun, being shaded all the rest of the day by these buildings. It is besides constantly refreshed by the cooling breeze from the Straits; for the current of the water produces likewise a current in the air, that renders this one of the coolest habitations in Sicily.

We cast anchor about four this afternoon, near the

centre of this enchanted semi-circle, the beauty of which greatly delighted us; but our pleasure was soon interrupted by a discovery that the name of one of our servants had been omitted in our bills of health; and an assurance from the captain, that if he was discovered we should certainly be obliged to perform a long quarantine. Whilst we were deliberating upon this weighty matter, we observed a boat with the people of the health-office approaching us. We had just time to get him wrapped up in a hammock, and shut down below the hatches; with orders not to stir in case of a search, and not appear again above deck till he should be called. The poor fellow was obliged to keep in his hole till it was dark, as our consul and some people of the health-office staid on board much longer than we could have wished, and we are still obliged to conceal him; for if he be discovered, we shall probably get into a very bad scrape. They are particularly strict here in this respect; and indeed they have great reason to be so; since this beautiful city was almost annihilated by the plague in the year 1743, when upwards of 70,000 people are said to have died in it and its district, in the space of a few months.

We have now got on shore, and are lodged in the most wretched of inns, although said to be a first-rate one for Sicily: but we are contented; for surely after bad ship accommodation and sea sickness, any house will appear a palace, and any bit of dry land a paradise.

I shall send this off by the post, which goes to-morrow for Naples, and shall continue from day to day to give you some account of our transactions; trifling as they are, there will probably be something new; and it will add greatly to the pleasure of our expedition, to think that it has contributed to your entertainment. Adieu.

Ever yours, &c.

LETTER III.

Messina, May 20.

THE harbour of Messina is formed by a small promontory or neck of land that runs off from the east end of the city, and separates that beautiful bason from the rest of the Straits. The shape of this promontory is that of a reaping hook, the curvature of which forms the harbour, and secures it from all winds. From the striking resemblance of its form, the Greeks, who never gave a name that did not either describe the object, or express some of its most remarkable properties, called this place Zancle or the Sickle, and feigned that the sickle of Saturn fell on this spot, and gave it its form. But the Latins, who were not quite so fond of fable, changed its name to Messina (from *messis*, a harvest) because of the great fertility of its fields. It is certainly one of the safest harbours in the world, after ships have got in; but it is likewise one of the most difficult access. The celebrated gulf or whirlpool of Charybdis lies near to its entry, and often occasions such an intestine and irregular motion in the water, that the helm loses most of its power, and ships have great difficulty to get in, even with the fairest wind that can blow. This whirlpool, I think, is probably formed by the small promontory I have mentioned; which contracting the Straits in this spot, must necessarily increase the velocity of the current; but no doubt other causes, of which we are ignorant, concur, for this will by no means account for all the appearances which it has produced. The great noise occasioned by the tumultuous motion of the waters in this place, made the ancients liken it

to a voracious sea-monster perpetually roaring for its prey; and it has been represented by their authors, as the most tremendous passage in the world. Aristotle gives a long and formidable description of it in his 125th chapter *De Admirandis*, which I find translated in the old Sicilian book I have got here. It begins, "Adeo profundum, horridumque spectaculum," &c. but it is too long to transcribe. It is likewise described by Homer *, 12th of the Odyssey; Virgil †, 3d Æneid; Lucretius, Ovid, Sallust, Seneca, as also by many of the old Italian and Sicilian poets, who all speak of it in terms of horror; and represent it as an object that inspired terror, even when looked on at a distance.

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* Dire Scylla there a scene of horror forms,
And here Charybdis fills the deep with storms:
When the tide rushes from her rumbling caves,
The rough rock roars; tumultuous boil the waves;
They toss, they foam, a wild confusion raise,
Like waters bubbling o'er the fiery blaze:
Eternal mists obscure the aërial plain,
And high above the rock she spouts the main.
When in her gulfs the rushing sea subsides,
She drains the ocean with her refluent tides.
The rock re-bellows with a thundering sound:
Deep, wonderous deep, below appears the ground.

POPE.

† That realm of old, a ruin huge was rent,
In length of ages from the continent.
With force convulsive burst the isle away:
Then the dread opening broke the thundering sea.
At once the thundering sea Sicilia tore,
And sunder'd from the fair Hesperian shore;
And still the neighbouring coasts and towns divides
With scanty channels and contracted tides.
Fierce to the right tremendous Scylla roars,
Charybdis on the left the flood devours:
Thrice swallowed in her womb subsides the sea,
Deep, deep as hell and thrice she spouts away
From her black bellowing gulfs disgorged on high
Waves after waves, that dash against the sky.

PITT.

It certainly is not now so formidable; and very probably the violence of the motion, continued for so many ages, has by degrees worn smooth the rugged rocks, and juttling shelves, that may have intercepted and confined the waters. The breadth of the Straits too, in this place, I make no doubt is considerably enlarged. Indeed, from the nature of things it must be so; the perpetual friction occasioned by the current must wear away the bank on each side, and enlarge the bed of the water.

The vessels in this passage were obliged to go as near as possible to the coast of Calabria, in order to avoid the suction occasioned by the whirling of the waters in this vortex; by which means, when they came to the narrowest and most rapid part of the Straits, betwixt Cape Pelorus and Scylla, they were in great danger of being carried upon that rock. From whence the proverb, still applied to those, who in attempting to avoid one evil fall into another.

"Incidit in Scyllam, cupiens evitare Charibdem."

There is a fine fountain of white marble on the key, representing Neptune holding Scylla and Charybdis chained, under the emblematical figures of two sea-monsters, as represented by the poets.

The little neck of land, forming the harbour of Messina, is strongly fortified. The citadel, which is indeed a very fine work, is built on that part which connects it with the main land. The farthermost point, which runs out to sea, is defended by four small forts, which command the entry into the harbour. Betwixt these lie the lazaret, and a light-house, to warn sailors of their approach to Charybdis, as that other on Cape Pelorus is intended to give them notice of Scylla.

It is probably from these light-houses (by the

Greeks called Pharoi) that the whole of this celebrated Strait has been denominated the Faro of Messina.

There are a number of galleys and galliots in this beautiful harbour, which still add greatly to its beauty. Three of these sailed this morning, in order to cruize round the island, and to protect it from the sudden invasions of the Barbarians, who are often very troublesome on the south coast. These vessels made a very picturesque appearance as they went out of the harbour; their oars moving all together, with the greatest regularity. I think there are nine or ten men to each oar; and indeed it appears to be the hardest work you can imagine. They all rise, every stroke of the oar, and when they pull, they almost throw themselves on their backs, and seem to exert their utmost force. These wretches are chained to their oars, and sleep every night on the bare benches, without any thing to throw over them. Yet, what is strange, notwithstanding all the misery they suffer, I am told there was never known an instance of any one of them putting themselves to death. They often, indeed, confer that favour upon one another, but it is only in their quarrels, and by no means out of kindness. In a company of English in the same circumstances, promotion would probably go on much faster, as there would be no want of vacancies, provided only ropes and knives were to be had.

We intended this morning to have paid our respects to the prince of Villa Franca, the governor, and to have delivered our letters; but he is gone to his country-house, and as there are no carriages to be had, we are obliged to wait his arrival in town, which will probably be to-morrow or next day.

We are still under a good deal of uneasiness about our servant, and are obliged to conceal him carefully

from the people of the health-office, who seem to haunt us, as we have met them this morning in all our walks. Were he to be discovered, perhaps some of us might have the pleasure of making a little voyage, on board one of those galleys, for our amusement. Indeed the captain of the ship, poor fellow, would run the greatest risk, who is obliged to answer for every person on board.—We shall leave this place as soon as possible; for I do not believe there is much more to be seen about it.

20*th* at night. After dinner our depute-consul (a Sicilian) carried us to several convents, where we were received by the nuns with great politeness and affability. We conversed with them for some hours through the grate, and found some of them by no means deficient, either in point of knowledge or sprightliness; but none of them had sincerity enough (which we met with in Portugal more than once) to acknowledge the unhappiness of their situation. All pretended to be happy and contented, and declared they would not change their prison for the most brilliant situation in life. However, some of them had a soft melancholy in their countenances, that gave the lie to their words; and I am persuaded, in a tête-à-tête, and on a more intimate acquaintance, they would have told a very different story. Several of them are extremely handsome; but, indeed, I think they always appear so; and am very certain, from frequent experience, that there is no artificial ornament, or studied embellishment whatever, that can produce half so strong an effect, as the modest and simple attire of a pretty young nun, placed behind a double iron grate. To see an amiable, unaffected, and unadorned person, that might have been an honour and an ornament to society, make a voluntary

resignation of her charms, and give up the world and all its pleasures, for a life of fasting and mortification, it cannot fail to move our pity;

"And pity melts the mind to love."

There is another consideration which tends much to increase these feelings; that is, our total incapacity ever to alter her situation.—The pleasure of relieving an object in distress, is the only refuge we have against the pain which the seeing of that object occasions; but here, this is utterly denied us, and we feel with sorrow, that pity is all we can bestow.

From these, and the like reflections, a man generally feels himself in bad spirits after conversing with amiable nuns. Indeed, it is hardly possible, without a heavy heart, to leave the grate; that inexorable and impenetrable barrier.—At last, we took our leave, expressing our happiness in being admitted so near them; but at the same time deploring our misery, in seeing them for ever removed at so unmeasurable a distance from us. They were much pleased with our visit, and begged we would repeat it every day during our stay at Messina; but this might prove dangerous.

On leaving the convent, we observed a great concourse of people on the top of a high hill, at some distance from the city. The consul told us, it was the celebration of a great festival in honour of St Francis, and was worth our going to see. Accordingly, we arrived just as the saint made his appearance. He was carried through the crowd with vast ceremony, and received the homage of the people with a becoming dignity; after which he was again lodged in his chapel, where he performs a number of miracles every day, to all those who have abundance of money and abundance

of faith. His ministers, however, are only a set of poor greasy capuchins; who indeed do not seem to have enriched themselves in his service. In general, he is but a shabby master, if one may judge by the tattered clothes of his servants; and St Benedict, who does not pretend to half his sanctity, beats him all to nothing. The people continued to dance, in soft Sicilian measures, till after sun-set, when they retired. Many of the country girls are extremely handsome, and dance with a good grace. The young fellows were all in their Sunday's clothes, and made a good appearance. The assembly room was a fine green plain on the top of the hill. It pleased us very much, and put us in mind of some of Theocritus's descriptions of the Sicilian pleasures. But Theocritus, if he could have raised up his head, would probably have been a good deal puzzled what to make of the shabby figure of St Francis marching through amongst them with such majesty and solemnity. Another part of the ceremony too would have greatly alarmed him, as indeed it did us. The whole court before the church was surrounded with a triple row of small iron cannon, about six inches long; these were charged to the muzzle, and rammed very hard; after which they were set close to each other, and a train laid, that completed the communication through the whole number, which must have exceeded two thousand. Fire was set to the train, and in two or three minutes the whole was discharged by a running fire; the reports following one another so quick, that it was impossible for the ear to separate them. The effect was very grand; but it would have been nothing without the fine echo from the high mountains on each side of the Straits, which pro-

longed the sound for some considerable time after the firing was finished.

The view from the top of this hill is beautiful beyond description. The Straits appear like a vast majestic river flowing slowly betwixt two ridges of mountains, and opening by degrees from its narrowest point, till it swells to the size of an ocean. Its banks, at the same time, adorned with rich corn fields, vineyards, orchards, towns, villages and churches. The prospect is terminated on each side by the tops of high mountains covered with wood.

We observed in our walks to-day many of the flowers that are much esteemed in our gardens, and others too that we are not acquainted with. Larkspur, flos Adonis, Venus' looking-glass, hawksweed, and very fine lupins, grow wild over all these mountains. They have likewise a variety of flowering shrubs; particularly one in great plenty, which I do not recollect ever to have seen before: It bears a beautiful round fruit, of a bright shining yellow. They call it, Il pomo d'oro, or golden apple. All the fields about Messina are covered with the richest white clover, intermixed with a variety of aromatic plants, which perfume the air, and render their walks exceedingly delightful. But what is remarkable, we were most sensible of this perfume, when walking on the harbour which is at the greatest distance from these fields. I mentioned this peculiarity to a Messinese gentleman, who tells me, that the salt produced here by the heat of the sun, emits a grateful odour, something like violets; and it is that, probably, which perfumes the sea-shore. On consulting Fazzelo *De rebus Siculis*, I find he takes notice of the same singularity; and likewise observes, that the water of the Straits has a viscous or glutinous quality, which

by degrees cements the sand and gravel together, and at last consolidates them to the solidity of the rock.

There are fine shady walks on all sides of Messina; some of these run along the sea-shore, and are for ever fanned by the cooling breeze from the Straits. The houses are large, and most of the articles of life are cheap and in plenty, particularly fish, which are reckoned better here, than any where else in the Mediterranean. The hire of lodgings is next to nothing; almost one half of that noble range of buildings I have described, being absolutely uninhabited since the desolation of 1743; so that the proprietors are glad to get tenants on any terms. It now occurs to me, that from all these considerations, there is no place I have seen so admirably calculated for the residence of that flock of valetudinarians, which every autumn leave our country with the swallows, in search of warm climates. I have been inquiring with regard to their winter season, and find all agree, that, in general, it is much preferable to that of Naples. They allow they have sometimes heavy rain for two or three weeks; but it never lasts longer; and besides, they have always some fair hours every day, when people can go out for exercise; for the moment the rain is over, the walks are dry, the soil being a light gravel.

The advantages of Messina over Naples in other respects, I think, are considerable. At Naples there are no walks; and, the truth is, they have no occasion for them, no more indeed than they have for legs; for you know as well as I, that walking there is little less infamous than stealing; and any person that makes use of his limbs is looked upon as a blackguard, and despised by all good company. The rides too are all at a great distance; and you are obliged to go some miles

on streets and pavement before you get into the country; besides passing the vile grotto of Pausillipe, where you are in danger of being blinded, and stifled with dust. There are seldom any public diversions here; the attending of which at Naples, and complying with their bad hours, does often more than counteract all the benefit obtained from the climate. That detestable practice of gaming too is by no means so prevalent here; which from the anxiety it occasions to the mind, and lassitude to the body, must be death to all hectic people, weak breasts, or delicate nerves. I could say much more on this subject, but as I have many of these circumstances only from the report of the inhabitants, it makes me more diffident, than if I had known them from my own experience.

We found our banker, Mr M——, a very sensible man, and spent some hours with him, both this morning and evening, very agreeably. He has given us some account of the police of the country, the most singular, perhaps, of any in the world; to such a degree, indeed, that I shall not venture to tell it you, till I have talked it over with some other people, to see if the accounts agree;—though from the character that gentleman bears, both here and at Naples, he is as good authority as any in the island.

The prince of Villa Franca is arrived; so that we shall probably have our audience to-morrow morning. Adieu—We are just going to sup upon stakes made of the piesce spada or sword fish, which are caught in great plenty in these seas. The sword of this one is upwards of four feet long; and a formidable weapon it is:—not unlike a Highland broad sword. This fish, when cut, bears a perfect resemblance to flesh; so much, that none of us doubted it was beef-stakes they

were dressing for us, and expressed our surprise at finding that fish in Sicily.—Goodnight.

LETTER IV.

21*st*. WE are just returned from the prince's. He received us politely, but with a good deal of state. He offered us the use of his carriages, as there are none to be hired, and, in the usual style, desired to know in what he could be of service to us. We told him (with an apology for our abrupt departure) that we were obliged to set off to-morrow, and begged his protection on our journey. He replied, that he would give orders for guards to attend us, that should be answerable for every thing; that we need give ourselves no farther trouble; that whatever number of mules we had occasion for, should be ready at the door of the inn, at any hour we should think proper to appoint. He added, that we might entirely rely on those guards, who were people of the most determined resolution, as well as of the most approved fidelity, and would not fail to chastise on the spot any person who should presume to impose upon us.

Now, who do you think these trusty guards are composed of? Why, of the most daring, and most hardened villains, perhaps, that are to be met with upon earth, who, in any other country, would have been broken upon the wheel, or hung in chains; but are here publicly protected, and universally feared and respected. It was this part of the police of Sicily that I was afraid to give you an account of: But I have now conversed with the prince's people on the subject, and they have confirmed every circumstance Mr M. made me acquainted with.

He told me, that in this east part of the island, called Val Demoni, (from the devils that are supposed to inhabit Mount Ætna), it has ever been found impracticable to extirpate the banditti; there being numberless caverns and subterraneous passages in that mountain, where no troops could possibly pursue them: That besides, as they are known to be perfectly determined and resolute, never failing to take a dreadful revenge on all who have offended them, the prince of Villa Franca has embraced it, not only as the safest, but likewise as the wisest, and most political scheme, to become their declared patron and protector. And such of them as think proper to leave their mountains and forests, though perhaps only for a time, are sure to meet with good encouragement, and security in his service; they enjoy the most unbounded confidence, which, in no instance, they have ever yet been found to make an improper or a dishonest use of. They are clothed in the prince's livery, yellow and green, with silver lace; and wear likewise a badge of their honourable order, which entitles them to universal fear and respect from the people.

I have just been interrupted by an upper servant of the prince's, who, both by his looks and language, seems to be of the same worthy fraternity. He tells us, that he has ordered our muleteers, at their peril, to be ready by day-break; but that we need not go till we think proper; for it is their business to attend on *nostri eccellenzi*. He says, he has likewise ordered two of the most desperate fellows in the whole island to accompany us; adding, in a sort of whisper, that we need be under no apprehension; for if any person should presume to impose upon us to the value of a

single baiocc*, they would certainly put them to death. I gave him an ounce †, which I knew was what he expected; on which he redoubled his bows and his eccellenzis, and declared we were the most *honorabili Signori* he had ever met with, and that if we pleased, he himself should have the honour of attending us, and would chastise any person that should dare to take the wall of us, or injure us in the smallest trifle. We thanked him for his zeal, shewing him we had swords of our own. On which bowing respectfully, he retired.

I can now, with more assurance, give you some account of the conversation I had with Signior M——, who, as I said, appears to be a very intelligent man, and has resided here for these many years.

He says, that in some circumstances these banditti are the most respectable people of the island; and have by much the highest and most romantic notions of what they call their point of honour: That, however criminal they may be with regard to society in general, yet, with respect to one another, and to every person to whom they have once professed it, they have ever maintained the most unshaken fidelity. The magistrates have often been obliged to protect them, and even pay them court, as they are known to be perfectly determined and desperate; and so extremely vindictive, that they will certainly put any person to death, who has ever given them just cause of provocation. On the other hand, it never was known that any person who had put himself under their protection, and shewed that he had confidence in them, had cause to repent it, or was injured by any of them, in the most minute trifle; but, on the contrary, they will protect

* Small coin. † About eleven shillings.

him from impositions of every kind, and scorn to go halves with the landlord, like most other conductors and travelling servants; and will defend him with their lives, if there is occasion. That those of their number who have inlisted themselves in the service of society, are known and respected by the other banditti all over the island: and the persons of those they accompany are ever held sacred. For these reasons, most travellers choose to hire a couple of them from town to town; and may thus travel over the whole island in safety. To illustrate their character the more, he added two stories, which happened but a few days ago, and are still in every body's mouth.

A number of people were found digging in a place where some treasure was supposed to be hid during the plague: As this has been forbid under the most severe penalties, they were immediately carried to prison, and expected to have been treated without mercy; but luckily for the others, one of these heroes happened to be of the number. He wrote to the Prince of Villa Franca, and made use of such powerful arguments in their favour, that they were all immediately set at liberty.

This will serve to shew their consequence with the civil power; the other story will give you a strong idea of their barbarous ferocity, and the horrid mixture of stubborn vice and virtue (if I may call it by that name) that seems to direct their actions. I should have mentioned, that they have a practice of borrowing money from the country people, who never dare refuse them; and if they promise to pay it, they have ever been found punctual and exact, both as to the time and the sum; and would much rather rob and murder an innocent person, than fail of payment at the day appointed; And this they have often been obliged to do, only in

order, as they say, to fulfil their engagements, and to save their honour.

It happened within this fortnight, that the brother of one of these heroic banditti having occasion for money, and not knowing how to procure it, determined to make use of his brother's name and authority, an artifice which he thought could not easily be discovered; accordingly he went to a country priest, and told him his brother had occasion for twenty ducats, which he desired he would immediately lend him. The priest assured him that he had not so large a sum, but that if he would return in a few days it should be ready for him. The other replied, that he was afraid to return to his brother with this answer; and desired, that he would by all means take care to keep out of his way, at least till such time as he had pacified him; otherwise he could not be answerable for the consequences.—As bad fortune would have it, the very next day the priest and the robber met in a narrow road; the former fell a-trembling as the latter approached, and at last dropped on his knees to beg for mercy. The robber, astonished at his behaviour, desired to know the cause of it. The trembling priest answered, "Il denaro, il denaro, the money, the money—but send your brother tomorrow, and you shall have it." The haughty robber assured him, that he disdained taking money of a poor priest; adding, that if any of his brothers had been low enough to make such a demand, he himself was ready to advance the sum. The priest then acquainted him with the visit he had received the preceding night from his brother, by his order: assuring him, that if he had been master of the sum, he should immediately have supplied it.—Well, says the robber, I will now convince you whether my brother or I are most to be be-

lieved; you shall go with me to his house, which is but a few miles distant. On their arrival before the door, the robber called on his brother, who never suspecting the discovery, immediately came to the balcony; but on perceiving the priest, he began to make excuses for his conduct. The robber told him, there was no excuse to be made; that he only desired to know the fact, Whether he had gone to borrow money of that priest in his name or not?—On his owning he had, the robber with deliberate coolness lifted up his blunderbuss to his shoulder, and shot him dead; and turning to the astonished priest, "You will now be persuaded," said he, "that I had no intention of robbing you at least."

You may now judge how happy we must be in the company of our guards. I don't know but this very hero may be one of them; as we are assured they are two of the most intrepid and resolute fellows in the island. I will not close this letter, till I give you some account of our journey. In the mean time Adieu. We are going to take a look at the churches and public buildings: but with these I shall trouble you very little.

21*st* at night. We have been very well entertained both from what we have seen and heard. We used to admire the dexterity of some of the divers at Naples, when they went to the depth of forty-eight or fifty feet, and could not conceive how a man could remain three minutes under water without drawing breath; but these are nothing to the feats of one Colas, a native of this place, who is said to have lived for several days in the sea, without coming to land, and from thence got the surname of Pesce, or the fish. Some of the Sicilian authors affirm, that he caught fish merely by his agility in the water; and the credulous Kircher asserts, that he could walk across the Straits at the bot-

tom of the sea.—Be that as it will, he was so much celebrated for swimming and diving, that one of their kings (Frederick) came on purpose to see him perform: which royal visit proved fatal to poor Pesce; for the king, after admiring his wonderful force and agility, had the cruelty to propose his diving near the gulf of Charybdis; and to tempt him the more, threw in a large golden cup, which was to be his prize, should he bring it up. Pesce made two attempts, and astonished the spectators by the time he remained under water: but in the third, it is thought he was caught by the whirlpool, as he never appeared more; and his body is said to have been found some time afterwards near Taurominum (about thirty miles distant) it having been observed that what is swallowed up by Charybdis is carried south by the current, and thrown out upon that coast. On the contrary, nothing wrecked here was ever carried through the Straits, or thrown out on the north side of Sicily, unless we believe what Homer says of the ship of Ulysses.

We have been again to take a view of the Straits at this famous whirlpool, and are more and more convinced that it must be infinitely diminished; indeed, in comparison of what it was, almost reduced to nothing. The sea appeared to have no extraordinary motion there, and ships and boats seemed to pass it with ease. When we compare this its present state, with the formidable description of so many ancient authors, poets, historians, and philosophers, it appears indeed not improbable that this island has been torn from the continent by some violent convulsion, and that near to this spot huge caverns have been opened, which, drinking in the waters in one course of the current, and throwing them out in the other, may perhaps, in some measure, ac-

count for the phenomena of Charybdis—I find it described both by Homer and Virgil, as alternately swallowing up, and throwing out every object that approached it *. Now, is it not probable, that these caverns in process of time have been, in a great measure, filled up by the immense quantities of rocks, sand, gravel, &c. that were perpetually carried in by the force of the current?—I own I am not quite satisfied with this solution, but at present I cannot think of a better:—The fact, however, is certain, that it must have been a dreadful object even in Virgil's time, else he never would have made Æneas and his fleet perceive its effects at so great a distance, and immediately run out to sea to avoid it; nor would he have made Helenus at such pains to caution him against that dangerous gulf, and advise him rather to make the whole tour of Sicily than attempt to pass it. Indeed, it is so often mentioned both in the voyage of Æneas and Ulysses, and always in such frightful terms, that we cannot doubt of its having been a very terrible object †.

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* Dextrum Scylla latus, lævum implacata Charybdis
Obsidet, atque imo barathri ter gurgite vastos
Sorbet in abruptum fluctus, rursusque sub auras
Erigit alternos, et sidera verberat unda.

† Seneca gives this account of it in a letter to Lucillus; "Scyllam saxum esse, et quidem terribile navigantibus optime scio: Charybdis an respondeat fabulis prescribi mihi desidero, fac nos certiores, utrum uno tantum vento agatur in vortices, an omnis tempestas, ac mare illud contorqueat, et an verum sit quidquid illi freti turbine areptum est," &c.

And the following is a translation from Strabo.

"Ante urbem Paululum in trajectu Charybdis ostenditur; Profundum quidem immensum; Quo inundationes freti: mirum in modum navigia detrahunt: magnas per circumductiones, et vortices precipata, quibus absorptis, ac dissolutis, naufragiorum fragmenta ad Tauromitanum litus attrahuntur," &c.

"Est igitur Charybdis (says Sallust) mare periculosum nau-

After seeing the beautiful harbour of Messina, we have found nothing much worthy of notice in the city. Some of the churches are handsome, and there are a few tolerable paintings. One ceremony, from the account they give it, I should like much to have seen: the celebration of the feast of the Vara. It appears, indeed, to be a very singular exhibition, and I am heartily sorry it does not happen at this season. In order to the more dignified appearance of the Virgin Mary on this occasion, they have invented a very curious machine, which I am told represents heaven, or at least a part of it. It is of a huge size, and moves through the street with vast pomp and ceremony. In the centre is the principal figure, which represents the Virgin; and a little higher, there are three others to denote the Trinity. Round these are a number of wheels, said to be of a very curious construction. Every wheel contains a legion of angels, according to their different degrees of precedency: seraphims, cherubims, and powers. These are represented by a great number of beautiful little children, all glittering in clothes of gold and silver tissue, with wings of painted feathers fixed to their shoulders. When the machine is set in motion, all these wheels move round, and the different choirs of angels continue in a constant flutter, singing Hallelujahs round the Trinity and the Virgin during the whole of the procession, and are said to make a most beautiful appearance. This is all I could learn of this singular show, neither were we admitted to see the machine; conscious, I suppose, of the ridicule of which

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tis; quod contrariis fluctuum cursibus, collisionem facit, et rapta quodque absorbet."

But these are moderate indeed when compared to the descriptions of the poets.

it is susceptible, they did not choose to unveil so sacred an object to the eyes of heretics.—This island has ever been famous for the celebration of its feasts, even in ancient as well as modern times. They spare no expence; and as they have a large share both of superstition and invention, they never fail to produce something either very fine or very ridiculous. The feast of St Rosolia at Palermo is said to be one of the finest shows in Europe, and costs that city every year a large sum. They assure us there is more taste and magnificence displayed in it, than in any thing of the kind in Italy; and advise us by all means to attend it, as it happens some time near the middle of summer, when we shall probably be in that end of the island.

If you please we shall now take leave of Messina;—I did not expect to make so much out of it.—But it would not be fair neither, without at least putting you in mind of the great veneration it has ever been held in by the rest of Sicily, for the assistance it gave to Count Rugiero in freeing the island from the yoke of the Saracens; in consideration of which, great privileges were granted it by the succeeding kings; some of which are said still to remain. It was here that the Normans landed; and this city, by the policy of some of its own inhabitants, was the first conquest they made; after which their victorious arms were soon extended over the whole island; and a final period put to the Saracen tyranny. Count Rugiero fixed the seat of government at Palermo; and put the political system of the island upon a solid basis; of which the form (and the form alone) still remains to this day. He divided the whole island into three parts; one he gave to his officers, another to the church, and a third he reserved for himself. Of these three branches he com-

posed his parliament, that respectable body, of which the skeleton now only exists; for it has long ago lost all its blood, nerves, and animal spirits; and for many ages past has been reduced to a perfect *caput mortuum*. The superstitious tyranny of Spain has not only destroyed the national spirits of its own inhabitants, but likewise that of every other country which has fallen under its power. Adieu. Ever yours.

P. S. A-propos! There is one thing I had almost forgot, and I should never have forgiven myself. Do you know the most extraordinary phenomenon in the world is often observed near to this place? I laughed at it at first as you will do; but I am now convinced of its reality; and I am persuaded too, that if ever it had been thoroughly examined by a philosophical eye, the natural cause must long ago have been assigned.

It has often been remarked, both by the ancients and moderns, that in the heat of summer, after the sea and air have been much agitated by the winds, and a perfect calm succeeds, there appears, about the time of dawn, in that part of the heavens over the Straits, a great variety of singular forms, some at rest and some moving about with great velocity. These forms, in proportion as the light increases, seem to become more aërial, till at last, some time before sun-rise, they entirely disappear.

The Sicilians represent this as the most beautiful sight in nature: Leanti, one of their latest and best writers, came here on purpose to see it: He says, the heavens appeared crowned with a variety of objects: he mentions palaces, woods, gardens, &c. besides the figures of men, and other animals, that appear in motion amongst them. No doubt, the imagination must

be greatly aiding, in forming this aërial creation; but as so many of their authors, both ancient and modern, agree in the fact, and give an account of it from their own observation, there certainly must be some foundation for the story. There is one Giardini, a Jesuit, who has lately written a treatise of this phenomenon, but I have not been able to find it: The celebrated Messinese Gallo has likewise published something on this singular subject; if I can procure either of them in the island, you shall have a more perfect account of it. The common people, according to custom, give the whole merit to the devil; and indeed it is by much the shortest and easiest way of accounting for it. Those who pretend to be philosophers, and refuse him this honour, are greatly puzzled what to make of it. They think it may be owing to some uncommon refraction or reflection of the rays from the water of the Straits; which, as it is at that time carried about in a variety of eddies and vortexes, must consequently, say they, make a variety of appearances on any medium where it is reflected. This, I think, is nonsense; or at least very near it; and till they can say more to the purpose, I think they had much better have left it in the hands of the old gentleman. I suspect it is something in the nature of our Aurora Borealis, and, like many of the great phenomena of Nature, depends upon electrical causes; which, in future ages, I have little doubt, will be found to be as powerful an agent in regulating the universe, as gravity is in this age, or as the subtle fluid was in the last.

The electrical fluid, in this country of volcanoes, is probably produced in a much greater quantity than in any other. The air, strongly impregnated with this matter, and confined betwixt two ridges of mountains;

at the same time exceedingly agitated from below by the violence of the current, and the impetuous whirling of the waters; may it not be supposed to produce a variety of appearances? And may not the lively Sicilian imaginations, animated by a belief in demons, and all the wild offspring of superstition, give these appearances as great a variety of forms?-Remember, I do not say it is so; and hope yet to have it in my power to give you a better account of this matter. However, if you should suppose me in this story, or in any future one I may tell you, to be inclined to the fabulous, you will please to remember that I am now in the country of fable; this island having given rise to more perhaps, except Greece, than all the world beside. You have, therefore, only to suppose that these regions are still contagious; and call to mind that Mount Ætna has ever been the great mother of monsters and chimeras both in the ancient and modern world. However, I shall, if possible, keep free of the infection, and entertain you only with such subjects as fall under my own observation. But indeed, from what I have already heard of that wonderful mountain, the most moderate account of it would appear highly fabulous to all such as are unacquainted with objects of this kind. Adieu. We think of setting off to-morrow by day-break. I am sorry it has not been a storm, that we might have had a chance of seeing Pandemonium reared over our heads, and all the devils at work around it.

I shall leave this to be sent by the first post, and shall write you again from Catania, if we escape unhurt from all the perils of Ætna. Adieu.

LETTER V.

Giardini, near Tauromineum, May 22.

WE have had a delightful journey, and if all Sicily be but as agreeable, we shall not repent of our expedition. We left Messina early this morning, with six mules for ourselves and servants, and two for our baggage. This train, I assure you, makes no contemptible appearance; particularly when you call to mind our front and rear guard; by much the most conspicuous part of it. These are two great drawcansir figures, armed cap-à-pée, with a broad hanger, two enormous pistols, and a long arquebuse: This they kept cockt and ready for action in all suspicious places; where they recounted abundance of wonderful stories of robberies and murders; some of them with such very minute circumstances, that I am fully persuaded they themselves were the principal actors. However, I look upon our situation as perfectly secure; they pay us great respect, and take the utmost pains that we shall not be imposed upon. Indeed, I think they impose upon every body except us; for they tax the bills according to their pleasure; and such cheap ones I never paid before. To-day's dinner for eleven men (our three muleteers included) and feeding for ten mules and horses, did not amount to half-a-guinea. And although we pay them high, (an ounce a-day each), yet I am persuaded they save us at least one-half of it on our bills. They have entertained us with some of their feats, and make no scruple of owning their having put several people to death; but add, "Mas tutti, tutti honorabili

mente,"—that is to say, they did not do it in a dastardly manner, nor without just provocation.

The sea-coast of Sicily is very rich; the sides of some of the mountains are highly cultivated, and present the most agreeable aspect that can be imagined:—corn, wine, oil, and silk, all mixed together, and in the greatest abundance: However, the cultivated part is but small in proportion to what is lying waste, and only serves to shew the great fertility of this island, were it peopled and in industrious hands. The sides of the road are covered with a variety of flowers and of flowering shrubs; some of them exceedingly beautiful. The inclosures are many of them fenced with hedges of the Indian fig, or prickly pear; as in Spain and Portugal; and our guides assure us, that in many of the parched ravines round Ætna, there are plenty of trees which produce both cinnamon and pepper; not so strong they allow as those of the spice islands, but which are sold to the merchants at a low price, by a set of banditti, who dress themselves like hermits: These spices are mixed with the true pepper and cinnamon from the Indies, and sent over all Europe.

The road from Messina to this place is extremely romantic. It lies the whole way along the coast, and commands the view of Calabria, and the south part of the Straits; covered with chebecks, galleys, galliots, and a quantity of fishing-boats. The view on the right hand is confined by high mountains, on the very summits of which they have built several considerable towns and villages, which with their churches and steeples make a very picturesque appearance. They have chosen this elevated situation, I suppose, with a double view; to protect them from their enemies, and from the violent heat of the climate: This forenoon we

found it excessive, but had the finest swimming in the world before dinner; which kept us cool and fresh for all the rest of the day. We have besides provided ourselves with umbrellas, without which, at this season, travelling would be impracticable.

Betwixt this place and Messina, a little to the right, lie the mountains, formerly called the Nebrodes; and likewise the mountain of Neptune, which is reckoned the highest of that chain. It is celebrated for a gulf or crater on its summit, from whence, at particular times, there issues an exceeding cold wind, with such violence, that it is difficult to approach it. I was sorry to pass this singular mountain, but it would have delayed us a day or two to visit it; and we are hastening with impatience to a much greater object: It is now named Il monto Scuderio, and is said to be so high that the Adriatic can be seen from its summit. From the description they give of it, it appears evidently to be an old volcano. The Nisso takes its rise from this mountain; a river renowned in antiquity for the gold found in its channel; for which reason, it was by the Greeks called Chrysothoas. It is said, the remains of the ancient gold mines are still to be seen near the source of the river; but the modern masters of Sicily have never been enterprising enough to explore them. It was on this charming coast, where the flocks of Apollo were kept by his daughters, Phæthusa and Lampetie; the seizing of which by Ulysses' companions, proved the cause of their deaths, and of all his subsequent misfortunes. The mountain of Tauromina is very high and steep, and the road up to it is exceedingly rugged.

This once famous city is now reduced to an insignificant burgh; yet even these small remains give a high

idea of its former magnificence. The theatre, I think, is accounted the largest in the world. It appears to me greatly superior to that of Adrian's villa, near Rome. It is entire enough, to give a very tolerable idea of the Roman theatre, and indeed astonishes by its vastness; nor can I conceive how any voice would extend through the prodigious number of people it must have contained. I paced about one quarter of it, over the boxes that were intended for the women, which is not near the outward circle of all; the rest is so broken, that I could get no farther. It measured about 120 ordinary steps, so that you may conceive the greatness of the whole. The seats front Mount Ætna, which makes a glorious appearance from this place; and no doubt has often diverted their attention from the scene. It arises from an immense base, and mounts equally on all sides to its summit: It is just now throwing out volumes of white smoke, which do not rise in the air, but seem to roll down the side of the mountain like a vast torrent. The ascent of Ætna on each side is computed at about 30 miles, and the circumference of its base at 150: I think it does not appear to be so much: but I shall probably be enabled to give you a fuller account of it afterwards.

After admiring the great theatre of Taurominum, we went to examine the Naumachia, and the reservoirs for supplying it with water. About 150 paces of one side of the wall of the Naumachia remains; but as this is not complete, there is no judging of its original dimensions. This is supposed to have been a large square, inclosed with strong walls, and capable of being filled with water on occasion; intended for the exhibition of sea-fights, and all naval exercises: There were four re-

servoirs for supplying this with water. All are upon the same grand scale. One of these is almost entire; it is supported by a great number of strong pillars, in the same manner as those of Titus' baths at Rome, and several others you may have seen in Italy.—I would dwell longer on objects of this kind; but I am persuaded descriptions can give but a very imperfect idea of them; and to mark out the precise dimensions with a mathematical exactness, where there is nothing very remarkable, must surely be but a dry work, both to the writer and reader. I shall therefore content myself (I hope it will content you too) with endeavouring to communicate, as entire as possible, the same impression I myself shall receive, without descending too much to particulars; or fatiguing myself or you with the mensuration of antique walls, merely because they are such, except where there is indeed something very striking and different too, from what has already been described in Italy.

I own I despair of success: Few things I believe in writing more difficult than thus "s'emparer de l'imagination," to seize—to make ourselves masters of the reader's imagination, to carry it along with us through every scene, and make it in a manner congenial with our own; every prospect opening upon him with the same light, and arising in the same colours, and at the same instant too, as upon us: For where descriptions fail in this, the pleasure of reading them must be very trivial. Now, perhaps, this same journal style is the most favourable of any to produce these effects. It is at least the most agreeable to the writer: who never has his subject to seek, but needs only recollect what has passed since he last laid down the pen, and travel the day over again; and if he travels it to good pur-

pose, it ought to be equally agreeable to the reader too, who thereby becomes one of the party, and bears a share in all the pleasures of the journey, without suffering from the fatigues of it.

One of my great difficulties, I see, will be the finding proper places to write in, for the inns are altogether execrable, and there is no such thing as getting a room to one's self: I am just now writing on the end of a barrel, which I chose rather than the table, as it is farther removed from noise. I must therefore entreat you, once for all, to excuse incorrectness and want of method. How can one be methodical upon a barrel? —It has ever been the most declared enemy to method. You might as well expect a sermon from Bacchus, or a coherent speech from our friend Lord —— after he has finished the third bottle. You will be pleased then just to take things as they occur. Were I obliged to be strictly methodical, I should have no pleasure in writing you these letters; and then, if my position is just, you could have no pleasure in reading them.

Our guards have procured us beds, though not in the town of Taurominum, but in Giardini, a village at the foot of the mountain on which it stands. This people are extremely attentive, and have produced us an excellent supper and good wine, which now waits—but shall wait no longer. Adieu. To-morrow, we intend to climb Mount Ætna on this (its east) side, if we find it practicable. Ever yours.

LETTER VI.

Catania, May 24.

I AM already almost two days in arrears. Yesterday we were so much fatigued with the abominable roads of Mount Ætna, that I was not able to wield a pen; and to-day, I assure you, has by no means been a day of rest; however, I must not delay any longer, otherwise I shall never be able to make up my lee-way. I am afraid you will suffer more from the fatigues of the journey than I at first apprehended.

We left Giardini at five o'clock. About half a mile farther the first region of Mount Ætna begins, and here they have set up the statue of a saint, for having prevented the lava from running up the mountain of Taurominum, and destroying the adjacent country; which the people think it certainly must have done, had it not been for this kind interposition; but he very wisely, as well as humanely, conducted it down a low valley to the sea.

We left the Catania road on the left, and began to ascend the mountain, in order to visit the celebrated tree, known by the name of *Il Castagno de' Cento Cavalli* (the chesnut tree of a hundred horse): which for some centuries past has been looked upon as one of the greatest wonders of Ætna. We had likewise proposed, if possible, to gain the summit of the mountain by this side, and to descend by the side of Catania; but we were soon convinced of the impossibility of this, and obliged, with a good deal of reluctance, to relinquish that part of our scheme.

As we advanced in the first region of Ætna, we ob-

served that there had been eruptions of fire all over this country at a great distance from the summit, or principal crater of the mountain. On our road to the village of Piedmonte, I took notice of several very considerable craters; and stones of a large size, scattered all around, that had been discharged from them. These stones are precisely such as are thrown out of the crater of Mount Vesuvius; and, indeed, the lava too seems to be of the same nature, though rather more porous.

The distance from Giardini to Piedmonte is only ten miles, but as the road is exceedingly rough and difficult, we took near four hours to travel it. The barometer, which at Giardini (on the sea side) stood at 29 inches 10 lines, had now fallen to 27: 3. Fahrenheit's thermometer (made by Mr Adams in London) 78 degrees. We found the people extremely curious and inquisitive to know our errand, which when we told, many of them offered to accompany us. Of these we chose two; and after drinking our tea, which was matter of great speculation to the inhabitants, who had never before seen a breakfast of this kind, we began to climb the mountain.

We were directed for five or six miles of our road by an aqueduct, which the Prince of Palagonia has made at a great expence, to supply Piedmonte with water. After we left the aqueduct, the ascent became a good deal more rapid, till we arrived at the beginning of the second region, called by the natives *la Regione Sylvosa*, or the woody region; because it is composed of one vast forest, that extends all around the mountain. Part of this was destroyed by a very singular event, not later than the year 1755.—During an eruption of the volcano, an immense torrent of boiling water issued, as is imagined, from the great crater

of the mountain, and in an instant poured down to its base, overwhelming and ruining every thing it met with in its course. Our conductors shewed us the traces of the torrent, which are still very visible; but are now beginning to recover verdure and vegetation, which for some time appeared to have been lost. The track it has left seems to be about a mile and a half broad; and in some places still more.

The common opinion, I find, is, that this water was raised by the power of suction, through some communication betwixt the volcano and the sea; the absurdity of which is too glaring to need a refutation. The power of suction alone, even supposing a perfect vacuum, could never raise water to more than thirty-three or thirty-four feet, which is equal to the weight of a column of air the whole height of the atmosphere. But this circumstance, I should imagine, might be easily enough accounted for; either by a stream of lava issuing suddenly into one of the valleys of snow, that occupy the higher regions of the mountain, and melting it down; or what I think is still more probable, that the melted snow, finding vast caverns and reservoirs in the mountain, where it is lodged for some time, till the extensive heat of the lava below burst the sides of these caverns, produces this phenomenon, which has been matter of great speculation to the Sicilian philosophers, and has employed the pens of several of them. The same thing happened in an eruption of Vesuvius last century, and in an instant swept away about 500 people, who were marching in procession at the foot of the mountain, to implore the mediation of St Januarius.

Near to this place we passed through some beautiful woods of cork and ever green oak, growing absolutely out of the lava, the soil having as yet hardly filled the

crevices of that porous substance; and, not a great way further, I observed several little mountains that seemed to have been formed by a late eruption. I dismounted from my mule, and climbed to the top of them all. They are seven in number; every one of them with a regular cup or crater on the top, and in some the great gulf or (as they call it) *Voragine*, that had discharged the burnt matter of which these little mountains are formed, is still open. I tumbled stones down into these gulfs, and heard the noise for a long time after. All the fields round, to a considerable distance, are covered with large burnt stones discharged from these little volcanoes.

From this place, it is not less than five or six miles to the great chesnut-trees, through forests growing out of the lava, in several places almost impassable. Of these trees there are many of an enormous size; but the Castagno di Cento Cavalli is by much the most celebrated. I have often found it marked in an old map of Sicily, published near an hundred years ago; and in all the maps of Ætna, and its environs, it makes a very conspicuous figure. I own I was by no means struck with its appearance, as it does not seem to be one tree, but a bush of five large trees growing together. We complained to our guides of the imposition, when they unanimously assured us, that by the universal tradition, and even testimony of the country, all these were once united in one stem; that their grandfathers remembered this, when it was looked upon as the glory of the forest, and visited from all quarters; that for many years past it had been reduced to the venerable ruin we beheld. We began to examine it with more attention, and found that there was indeed an appearance, as if these five trees had really been once united in

one. The opening in the middle is at present prodigious; and it does indeed require faith to believe, that so vast a space was once occupied by solid timber.—But there is no appearance of bark on the inside of any of the stumps, nor on the sides that are opposite to one another. Mr Glover and I measured it separately, and brought it exactly to the same size, viz. two hundred and four feet round. If this was once united in one solid stem, it must with justice indeed have been looked upon as a very wonderful phenomenon in the vegetable world, and was deservedly styled the glory of the forest.

I have since been told by the Canonico Recupero, an ingenious ecclesiastic of this place, that he was at the expence of carrying up peasants with tools to dig round the Castagno de Cento Cavalli; and he assures me, upon his honour, that he found all these stems united below ground, in one root. I alleged that so extraordinary an object must have been mentioned by many of their writers. He told me that it had, and produced several examples; Philateo, Carrera, and some others. Carrera begs to be excused from telling its dimensions, but says, he is sure there was wood enough in that one tree to build a large palace. Their poet Bagolini too has celebrated a tree of the same kind, perhaps the same tree *; and Massa, one of their most esteemed authors, says that he has seen solid oaks upwards of forty feet round; but adds, that the size of the chesnut trees was beyond belief, the hollow of one of which, he says, contained three hundred sheep; and thirty people on horseback had often been in it at a time. I shall

* Supremos inter montes monstrosior omni
Monstrosi fætum stipitis Ætna dedit
Castaneam genuit, cujus modo concava cortex
Tarmam equitum haud parvam continet, atque greges, &c.

not pretend to say, that this is the same tree he means; or whether it ever was one tree or not. There are many others that are well deserving the curiosity of travellers. One of them about a mile and half higher on the mountain, is called *Il Castagno de Galea;* it rises from one solid stem to a considerable height, after which it branches out, and is a much finer object than the other. I measured it about two feet from the ground, and found it seventy-six feet round. There is a third called *Il Castagno del Nave*, that is pretty nearly of the same size. All these grow on a thick rich soil, formed originally, I believe, of ashes thrown out by the mountain.

The climate here is much more temperate than in the first region of Ætna, where the excessive heats must ever prevent a very luxuriant vegetation. I found the barometer had now fallen to 26 : 5½; which announces an elevation of very near 4000 feet; equivalent, in the opinion of some of the French academicians, to 18 or 20 degrees in the formation of a climate.

The vast quantity of nitre contained in the ashes of Ætna, probably contributes greatly to increase the luxuriance of this vegetation; and the air too, strongly impregnated with it from the smoke of the volcano, must create a constant supply of this salt, termed by some, not without reason, the food of vegetables.

There is the ruins of a house in the inside of the great chesnut-tree which had been built for holding the fruit it bears, which is still considerable; here we dined with excellent appetite, and being convinced, that it was in vain to attempt getting to the top of the mountain on that side, we began to descend; and after a very fatiguing journey over old lavas, now become fertile fields and rich vineyards, we arrived about sunset at *Jaci Reale*,

where, with no small difficulty, we at last got lodging in a convent of Dominicans.

The last lava we crossed before our arrival there, is of a vast extent; I thought we never should have had done with it; it certainly is not less than six or seven miles broad, and appears in many places to be of an enormous depth.

When we came near to the sea, I was desirous to see what form it had assumed in meeting with the water. I went to examine it, and found it had driven back the waves for upwards of a mile, and had formed a large black high promontory, where before it was deep water. This lava, I imagined, from its barrenness, for it is as yet covered with a very scanty soil, had run from the mountain only a few ages ago; but was surprised to be informed by Signior Recupero, the historiographer of Ætna, that this very lava is mentioned by Diodorus Siculus to have burst from Ætna in the time of the second Punic war, when Syracuse was besieged by the Romans. A detachment was sent from Tauromenum to the relief of the besieged. They were stopped on their march by this stream of lava, which having reached the sea before their arrival at the foot of the mountain, had cut off their passage; and obliged them to return by the back of Ætna, upwards of one hundred miles about. His authority for this he tells me, was taken from inscriptions on Roman monuments found on this lava, and that it was likewise well ascertained by many of the old Sicilian authors. Now as this is about two thousand years ago, one would have imagined, if lavas have a regular progress in becoming fertile fields, that this must long ago have become at least arable: this however is not the case, and it is as yet only covered with a very scanty vegetation, and incapable of pro-

ducing either corn or vines. There are indeed pretty large trees growing in the crevices, which are full of a rich earth; but in all probability it will be some hundred years yet before there is enough of it to render this land of any use to the proprietors.

It is curious to consider, that the surface of this black and barren matter, in process of time, becomes one of the most fertile soils upon earth: But what must be the time to bring it to its utmost perfection, when after two thousand years it is still in most places but a barren rock?—Its progress is possibly as follows. The lava being a very porous substance, easily catches the dust that is carried about by the wind; which, at first, I observe only yields a kind of moss: this rotting, and by degrees increasing the soil, some small meagre vegetables are next produced; which rotting in their turn, are likewise converted into soil. But this progress I suppose, is often greatly accelerated by showers of ashes from the mountain, as I have observed in some places the richest soil, to the depth of five or six feet and upwards; and still below that, nothing but rocks of lava. It is in these spots that the trees arrive at such an immense size. Their roots shoot into the crevices of the lava, and lay such hold of it, that there is no instance of the winds tearing them up; though there are many, of its breaking off their largest branches. A branch of one of the great chesnut trees, which we passed yesterday, has fallen across a deep gulley, and formed a very commodious bridge over the rivulet below. The people say it was done by St Agatha, the guardian saint of the mountain, who has the superintendence of all its operations.

In the lowest part of the first region of Ætna, the harvest is almost over; but in the upper parts of the

same region, near the confines of the Regione Sylvosa, it will not begin for several weeks.

The mapers, as we went along, abused us from all quarters, and more excellent blackguards I have never met with; but indeed, our guides were a full match for them. They began as soon as we were within hearing, and did not finish till we were got quite without reach of their voices, which they extended as much as they could. As it was all in Sicilian, we could make very little of it, but by the interpretation of our guides; however, we could not help admiring the volubility and natural elocution with which they spoke. This custom is as old as the time of the Romans, and probably much older, as it is mentioned by Horace, and others of these authors. It is still in vogue here as much as ever; the masters encourage it; they think it gives them spirits, and makes the work go on more cheerfully: and I believe they are right, for it is surprizing what pleasure they seemed to take in it, and what laughing and merriment it occasioned.

I forgot to mention that we passed the source of the famous cold river (*il fiume Freddo.*) This is the river so celebrated by the poets in the fable of Acis and Galatea. It was here that Acis was supposed to have been killed by Polyphemus, and the gods out of compassion converted him into this river; which, as still retaining the terror inspired by the dreadful voice of the Cyclops, runs with great rapidity, and about a mile from its source throws itself into the sea. It rises at once out of the earth a large stream. Its water is remarkably pure, and so extremely cold, that it is reckoned dangerous to drink it; but I am told it has likewise a poisonous quality, which proceeds from its being impregnated with vitriol to such a degree, that cattle

have often been killed by it. It never freezes; but, what is remarkable, it is said often to contract a degree of cold greater than that of ice.

These particulars I was informed of by the priests at Aci; which place, anciently called Aci Aquileia, and several others near it, Aci Castello, Aci Terra, &c. take their names from the unfortunate shepherd Acis.

A little to the east of the river Acis, is the mouth of the river Alcantara, one of the most considerable in the island. It takes its rise on the north side of Mount Ætna, and marks out the boundary of the mountain for about sixty miles. Its course has been stopped in many places by the eruptions of the volcano; so that, strictly speaking, the skirts of Ætna extend much beyond it, though it has generally been considered as the boundary. We passed it on our way to Piedmonte, over a large bridge built entirely of lava; and near to this the bed of the river is continued for a great way, through one of the most remarkable, and probably one of the most ancient lavas that ever run from Ætna. In many places the current of the river, which is extremely rapid, has worn down the solid lava to the depth of fifty or sixty feet. Recupero, the gentleman I have mentioned, who is engaged in writing the natural history of Ætna, tells me, he had examined this lava with great attention, and he thinks that its course, including all its windings, is not less than forty miles. It issued from a mountain on the north side of Ætna, and finding some valleys that lay on the east, it took its course that way, interrupting the Alcantara in many places, and at last arrived at the sea, not far from the mouth of that river.

The city of Jaci, or Aci, and indeed all the towns on this coast, are founded on immense rocks of lava,

heaped one above another, in some places to an amazing height; for it appears that these flaming torrents, as soon as they arrived at the sea, were hardened into rock, which not yielding any longer to the pressure of the liquid fire behind, the melted matter continuing to accumulate, formed a dam of fire, which in a short time run over the solid front, pouring a second torrent into the ocean; this was immediately consolidated and succeeded by a third, and so on.

Many of the places on the coast still retain their ancient names; but the properties ascribed to them by the ancients are now no more. The river Acis, which is now so poisonous, was of old celebrated by the sweetness and salubrity of its waters *; which Theocritus says, were ever held sacred by the Sicilian shepherds.

We were surprised to find that so many places retained the name of this swain, who, I imagined, had never existed, but in the imagination of the poets; But the Sicilian authors say, that Acis was the name of a king who reigned in this part of the island in the time of the most remote antiquity; in confirmation of which Massa gives the translation of an inscription found near Aci Castello †. He is said to have been slain in a fit of jealousy by Polyphemus, one of the giants of Ætna, which

* Quique per Ætnæos Acis petit æquora fines,
Et dulce gratum Nereide persuit unda. SIL. ITAL.

† DIÆ
OGNIÆ, SATURNIÆ, ÆTNÆÆ
DEORUM,
MARTI, FILIÆ, UXORI,
IN PORTU
SEPULCHRUM, TEMPLUM, ET ARCEM
ACIS,
FAUNI FILIUS, RICI NEPOS,
SATURNI PRONEPOS,
LATINI FRATER.

gave rise to the fable. Anguillara, a Sicilian poet, in relating this story, gives a tremendous idea of the voice of Polyphemus; the passage has been greatly admired.

" Tremo per troppo horrore Ætna; e Tifeo
Fece maggior la fiamma uscir del monte;
E Pacchino, e Peloro, e Lilibeo
Quasi attuffar nel mar l'altera fronte;
Cadde il martel di man nel Monte Etneao,
All Re di Lenno, a Sterope, e a Bronte;
Fuggir fiere et augei di lo ricetto
E si strinse ogni madre il figlio al Petto."

You will observe, however, that the Sicilian poet cannot in justice claim the entire merit of these lines, as they are evidently borrowed from Virgil's description of the sound of the Fury Alecto's horn, in the 7th Æneid, the last line, perhaps the most beautiful of the whole, almost word for word:

" Et trepidæ matres pressere ad pectora natos."

It has been observed too, by some critics, that even this description of Virgil is not his own, but copied from the account that Apollonius Rhodius gives of the roaring of the dragon that guarded the golden fleece: so that you see there is nothing new under the sun. Rhodius probably stole it from somebody else, and so on. Poets have ever been the greatest of all thieves; and happy it is that poetical theft is no felony; otherwise, I am afraid, Parnassus would have been but thinly peopled.

Farewell; to-morrow I shall endeavour to bring you up with us; for at present you will please to observe, that you have got no farther than the city of Jaci; and have still many extinguished volcanoes to pass before your arrival here. Ever yours, &c.

LETTER VII.

Catunia, May 25.

THE road from Jaci to this city is entirely over lava, and consequently very fatiguing and troublesome. Within a few miles of this place, we counted eight mountains formed by eruption, with every one its crater, from whence the burnt matter was discharged. Some of these are very high, and of a great compass. It appears evidently that the eruptions of Mount Ætna have formed the whole of the coast, and in many places have driven back the sea for several miles from its ancient boundary. The account the Sicilian authors give of the conflict betwixt these two adverse elements is truly tremendous; and in relating it, they seem to have been shaken with horror. Conceive the front of a torrent of fire, ten miles in breadth, and heaped up to an enormous height, rolling down the mountain and pouring its flames into the ocean! The noise, they assure us, is infinitely more dreadful than the loudest thunder; and is heard through the whole country to an immense distance. The water seemed to retire and diminish before the fire, and to confess its superiority; yielding up its possessions, and contracting its banks, to make room for its imperious Master who commands it: "Thus far shalt thou come, and no farther."—The clouds of salt vapour darken the face of the sun, covering up the scene under a veil of horror and of night; and laying waste every field and vineyard in these regions of the island. The whole fish on the coast are destroyed, the colour of the sea itself is changed, and the transparency of its waters lost for many months.

There are three rocks of lava at some little distance from shore, which Pliny takes frequent notice of, and calls them the Three Cyclops. It is pretty singular, that they are still distinguished by the same name.

The fate of Catania has been very remarkable, and will ever appear fabulous. It is situated immediately at the foot of this great volcano, and has been several times destroyed by it: That indeed is not extraordinary; it would have been much more so had it escaped; but what I am going to relate is a singularity that probably never happened to any city but itself. It was always in great want of a port, till by an eruption in the sixteenth century, and no doubt, by the interposition of St Agatha, what was denied them by nature, they received from the generosity of the mountain. A stream of lava, running into the sea, formed a mole which no expence could have furnished them. This lasted for some time a safe and commodious harbour, till at last, by a subsequent eruption, it was entirely filled up and demolished; so that probably the poor saint had sunk much in her credit; for at this unfortunate period, her miraculous veil, looked upon as the greatest treasure of Catania, and esteemed an infallible remedy against earthquakes and volcanoes, seems to have lost its virtue. The torrent burst over the walls, sweeping away the images of every saint that were placed there to oppose it; and, laying waste great part of this beautiful city, poured into the sea. However, the people say, that at that time they had given their saint just provocation, but that she had long ago been reconciled to them; and has promised never to suffer the mountain to get the better of them for the future. Many of them are so thoroughly convinced of this (for they are extremely superstitious) that I really believe

if the lava were at their walls, they would not be at the pains to remove their effects. Neither is it the veil of St Agatha alone that they think possessed of this wonderful dominion over the mountain, but every thing that has touched that piece of sacred attire, they suppose is impregnated in a lesser degree with the same miraculous properties. Thus there are a number of little bits of cotton and linen fixed to the veil; which, after being blessed by the bishop, are supposed to acquire power enough to save any person's house or garden; and wherever this expedient has failed, it is always ascribed to the want of faith of the person, not any want of efficacy in the veil. However, they tell you many stories of these bits of cotton being fixed to the walls of houses and vineyards, and preserving them entirely from the conflagration.

On our arrival at Catania, we were amazed to find that in so noble and beautiful a city there was no such thing as an inn. Our guides, indeed, conducted us to a house they called such; but it was so wretchedly mean and dirty, that we were obliged to look out for other lodgings; and by the assistance of the Canonico Recupero, for whom we had letters, we soon found ourselves comfortably lodged in a convent. The prince of Biscaris (the governor of the place) a person of very great merit and distinction, returned our visit this forenoon, and made us the most obliging offers.

Signior Recupero, who obligingly engages to be our Cicerone, has shewn us some curious remains of antiquity; but they have been all so shaken and shattered by the mountain, that hardly any thing is to be found entire.

Near to a vault, which is now thirty feet below ground, and has probably been a burial-place, there is a draw-

well, where there are several strata of lavas, with earth to a considerable thickness over the surface of each stratum. Recupero has made use of this as an argument to prove the great antiquity of the eruptions of his mountain. For as it requires two thousand years or upwards to form a scanty soil on the surface of a lava, there must have been more than that space of time betwixt each of the eruptions which have formed these strata. But what shall we say of a pit they sunk near to Jaci, of a great depth? They pierced through seven distinct lavas one under the other, the surfaces of which were parallel, and most of them covered with a thick bed of rich earth. Now, says he, the eruption which formed the lowest of these lavas, if we may be allowed to reason from analogy, must have flowed from the mountain at least 14,000 years ago.

Recupero tells me he is exceedingly embarrassed by these discoveries in writing the history of the mountain. —That Moses hangs like a dead weight upon him, and blunts all his zeal for inquiry; for that really he has not the conscience to make his mountain so young as that prophet makes the world.—What do you think of these sentiments from a Roman Catholic divine?—The bishop, who is strenuously orthodox—for it is an excellent see—has already warned him to be upon his guard, and not to pretend to be a better natural historian than Moses; nor to presume to urge any thing that may in the smallest degree be deemed contradictory to his sacred authority. Adieu. Ever yours.

LETTER VIII.

Catania, May 26.

THIS morning we went to see the house and museum of the prince of Biscaris; which, in antiques, is inferior to none I have ever seen, except that of the king of Naples at Portici. What adds greatly to the value of these is, that the prince himself has had the satisfaction of seeing the most of them brought to light. He has dug them out of the ruins of the ancient theatre of Catania, at an incredible expence; but happily his pains have been amply repaid, by the number and variety of curious objects he has discovered. It would be endless to enter into an enumeration of them; even during our short stay, we had the satisfaction of seeing part of a rich Corinthian cornice, and several pieces of statues, produced again to the light, after lying for so many ages in darkness and oblivion. His collection of medals, cameois, and intaglios is likewise very princely, and so are the articles in natural history: but the polite and amiable behaviour of the owner, gives more pleasure than all his curiosities. He did not, ostentatiously, like the prince of Villa Franca, tell us, that his house and carriages were at our command; but without any hint being given of it, we found his coach waiting at our door; and we shall probably be obliged to make use of it during our stay. His family consists of the princess his wife, a son, and a daughter, who seem to emulate each other in benignity. They put me in mind of some happy families I have seen in our own country, but resemble nothing we have met with on the continent. He is just now building a cu-

rious villa on a promontory formed by the lava of 1669. The spot where the house stands was formerly at least fifty feet deep of water; and the height of the lava above the present level of the sea, is not less than fifty more.

This afternoon I walked out alone to examine the capricious forms and singular appearances that this destructive branch has assumed in laying waste the country. I had not gone far when I spied a magnificent building at some distance, which seemed to stand on the highest part of it. My curiosity led me on, as I had heard no mention of any place on this side of the city. On entering the great gate, my surprise was a good deal increased on observing a facade almost equal to that of Versailles; a noble staircase of white marble, and every thing that announced a royal magnificence. I had never heard that the kings of Sicily had a palace at Catania, and yet I could not account for what I saw in any other way. I thought the vast front before me had been the whole of the palace; but conceive my amazement, when on turning the corner, I found another front of equal greatness; and discovered that what I had seen was only one side of a square.

I was no longer in doubt, well knowing that the church alone could be mistress of such magnificence. I hastened home to communicate this discovery to my friends, when I found the Canonico Recupero already with them. He abused me exceedingly for presuming to go out without our Cicerone, and declared he had never been so much disappointed in his life; as he had come on purpose to carry us there, and to enjoy our surprise and astonishment. He then told us, that it was no other than a convent of fat Benedictine monks, who were determined to make sure of a paradise, at least in this world, if not in the other. He added, that

they were worth about L. 15,000 a-year; an immense sum indeed for this country.

We went with Recupero to pay our respects to these sons of humility, temperance, and mortification; and we must own, they received and entertained us with great civility and politeness, and even without ostentation. Their museum is little inferior to that of the prince of Biscaris, and the apartments that contain it are much more magnificent. But their garden is the greatest curiosity: Although it be formed on the rugged and barren surface of the lava, it has a variety and a neatness seldom to be met with. The walks are broad and paved with flints: and the trees and hedges (which by the bye are in a bad taste, and cut into a number of ridiculous shapes) thrive exceedingly. The whole soil must have been brought from a great distance, as the surface of this lava (only 150 years old) is as hard and bare as a piece of iron. The church belonging to this convent, if finished, would be one of the finest in Europe: but as it is founded on the surface of the porous and brittle lava, part of the foundation has given way to the pressure of so huge a fabric; and several of the large arches that were intended to form the different chapels, have already fallen down. Only the west limb of the cross (not a fifth of the whole) is finished; and even this alone makes a very fine church. Here they have the finest organ I ever heard, even superior, I think, to that at Haarlem.

We went next to examine where the lava had scaled the walls of Catania. It must have been a noble sight. The walls are sixty-four palms high, (near sixty feet) and of great strength; otherwise they must have been borne down by the force of the flaming matter which rose over this height, and seems to have mounted con-

siderably above the top of the wall before it made its entry; at last it came down, sweeping before it every saint in the calendar, who were drawn up in order of battle on purpose to oppose its passage; and marching on in triumph, annihilated, in a manner, every object that dared to oppose it. Amongst other things, it covered up some fine fountains; one of which was so much esteemed, that they have at a great expence pierced through the lava, and have now recovered their favourite spring. This excavation is a very curious work, and worthy of the attention of travellers.

Catania is looked upon as one of the most ancient cities in the island, or indeed in the world.—Their legends bear, that it was founded by the Cyclops, or giants of Ætna, supposed to have been the first inhabitants of Sicily after the deluge: and some of the Sicilian writers pretend that it was built by Deucalion and Pyrrha as soon as the waters subsided, and they had got down again to the foot of the mountain. Its ancient name was Catetna, or the city of Ætna.

It is now reckoned the third city in the kingdom: though since Messina was destroyed by the plague, it may be well considered as the second. It contains upwards of thirty thousand inhabitants; has an university, the only one in the island; and a bishopric. The bishop's revenues are considerable, and arise principally from the sale of the snow on Mount Ætna; one small portion of which, lying on the north of the mountain, is said to bring him upwards of L. 1000 a-year; for Ætna furnishes snow and ice not only to the whole island of Sicily, but likewise to Malta, and a great part of Italy, and makes a very considerable branch of commerce; for even the peasants in these hot countries regale themselves with ices during the summer heats; and

there is no entertainment given by the nobility, of which these do not make a principal part: a famine of snow, they themselves say, would be more grievous than a famine either of corn or wine. It is a common observation amongst them, that without the snows of Mount Ætna, their island could not be inhabited; so essential has this article of luxury become to them. But Ætna not only keeps them cool in summer, but likewise keeps them warm in winter; the fuel for the greatest part of this island being carried from the immense and inexhaustible forests of this volcano, and constitutes too a very large branch of commerce.—But this amazing mountain perpetually carries me away from my subject; I was speaking of this city.—What of it was spared by the eruption of 1669, was totally ruined by the fatal earthquake 1693; when the greatest part of its inhabitants were buried under the walls of their houses and churches. Yet, after such repeated and such dismal disasters, so strange is their infatuation, that they could never be prevailed upon to change their situation. The whole city was soon rebuilt, after a new and an elegant plan, and is now much handsomer than ever. There is scarce any doubt, that in some future commotion of the mountain, it will be again laid in ashes. But at present they are in perfect security: the Virgin and St Agatha have both engaged to protect them; and under their banner they hold Ætna, with all the devils it contains, at defiance.

There are many remains of antiquity in this city, but indeed most of them are in a very ruinous state. One of the most remarkable is an elephant of lava, with an obelisk of Egyptian granite on his back. There are likewise considerable remains of a great theatre, besides the one belonging to the prince of Biscaris; a large

bath almost entire; the ruins of the great aqueduct, eighteen miles long; the ruins of several temples, one of Ceres, another of Vulcan: the church called *Bocca di Fuoco* was likewise a temple. But the most entire of all is a small rotundo, which, as well as the pantheon at Rome, and some others to be met with in Italy, in my opinion, demonstrates that form to be the most durable of any.

It has now been purged and purified from all the infection contracted from the heathen rites, and become a Christian church, dedicated to the blessed Virgin, who has long been constituted universal legatee, and executrix to all the ancient goddesses, celestial, terrestrial, and infernal: and, indeed, little more than the names are changed, the things continuing pretty much the same as ever.—The Catholics themselves do not attend to it: but it is not a little curious to consider, how small is the deviation in almost every article of their present rites from those of the ancients. I have somewhere seen an observation, which seems to be a just one: that during the long reign of heathenism, superstition had altogether exhausted her talent for invention: so that when a superstitious spirit seized Christians, they were under the necessity of borrowing from their predecessors, and imitating some part of their idolatry. This appears to be strictly the case. I took notice of it to Signior R——, who is not the most zealous sectary in the world, and who frankly owned the truth of this observation.

In some places the very same images still remain: they have only christened them; and what was Venus or Prosperine, is now Mary Magdalene or the Virgin. The same ceremonies are daily performed before these images; in the same language, and nearly in the same manner. The saints are perpetually coming down in

person, and working miracles, as the heathen gods did of old. The walls of the temples are covered with the vows of pilgrims as they were formerly. The holy water, which was held in such detestation by the first Christians, is again revered, and sprinkled about with the same devotion as in the time of Paganism. The same incense is burnt, by priests arrayed in the same manner, with the same grimaces, and genuflections, before the same images, and in the same temples too. In short, so nearly do the rites coincide, that were the pagan high priest to come back, and re-assume his functions, he would only have to learn a few new names: to get the Mass, the Paters, and the Aves by heart; which would be much easier to him, as they are in a language he understands, but of which his modern successors are often ignorant. Some things, to be sure, would puzzle him; and he would swear that all the mysteries of Elysium were nothing to the amazing mystery of transubstantiation; the only one that ever attempted to set both our understanding and our senses at defiance, and baffles equally all the faculties both of the soul and body.—He would, likewise, be a good deal at a loss to account for the strange metamorphosis of some of his old friends. That (he would say) I can well remember, was the statue of Venus Meretrix, and was only worshipped by the loose and voluptuous. She seems to be wonderfully improved since you made her a Christian; for I find she is now become the great protectress of chastity and virtue.—Juno too, who was so implacable and so revengeful, you have softened down into a very moderate sort of deity; for I observe you address her with as little fear or ceremony as any of the rest of them; I wish you would make the Furies Christians too, for

surely they would be much the better.—But observing the figure of St Anthony, he would exclaim with astonishment, But what do I behold!—Jupiter, the sovereign of gods and men, with a ragged cloak over his shoulders! What a humiliating spectacle! Well do I remember, with what awe we went before that once respectable image. But what has become of the thunderbolt, which he held in his hand to chastise the world; and what is that he has got in its place? His conductor would tell him, that it was only a piece of rope, with knots upon it, to chastise himself; adding, that he was now doing penance for his long usurpation; and that the thunder had long ago been put into better hands.—However, he would soon find, that even these saints sometimes change their names, according to the enthusiastic caprice of the people; and from this versatility, he would still be in hopes, in process of time, to see his friend re-assume his bolt and his dignity.

Do you remember old Huet—the greatest of all originals? One day, as he passed the statue of Jupiter in the capitol, he pulled off his hat, and made him a bow.—A Jacobite gentleman who observed it, asked him why he paid so much respect to the old gentleman.—For the same reason, replied Huet, that you pay so much to the Pretender. Besides, added he, I think there is rather a greater probability that his turn will come round again, than that of your hero; I shall therefore endeavour to keep well with him, and hope he will never forget that I took notice of him in the time of his adversity.

Indeed, within the course of my own observation, I can recollect some of the most capital saints in the calendar, who have been disgraced by the people, and new names given to their statues. When we were in

Portugal last war, the people of Castel Branco were so enraged at St Antonio, for allowing the Spaniards to plunder their town, contrary, as they affirmed, to his express agreement with them, that they broke many of his statues to pieces; and one that had been more revered than the rest, they took the head off, and clapped on one of St Francis in its place; whose name the statue ever afterwards retained. Even the great St Januarius himself, I am told, was in imminent danger during the last famine at Naples. A Swiss gentleman assured me, that he had heard them load him with abuse and invective; and declared point-blank, that if he did not procure them corn by such a time, he should no longer be their saint. However, such instances are but rare; and in general the poor Catholics are fully indemnified for these sudden fits of passion and resentment, for the full persuasion of the immediate presence and protection of their beloved patrons.

I have observed with pleasure, that glow of gratitude and affection that has animated their countenances; and am persuaded that the warmth of the enthusiastic devotion they often feel before their favourite saints, particularly their female ones, must have something extremely delightful in it; resembling, perhaps, the pure and delicate sensations of the most respectful love. I own I have sometimes envied them in their feelings; and in my heart cursed the pride of reason and philosophy, with all its cool and tasteless triumphs, that lulls into a kind of stoical apathy these most exquisite sensations of the soul. Who would not choose to be deceived, when the deception raises in him these delicious passions, that are so worthy of the human heart, and for which, of all others, it seems to be the most fitted? But if once you have steeled it over with the

hard and impenetrable temper of philosophy; the fine-spun threads of weakness and affection that were so pliable, and so easily tied, become hard and inflexible, and for ever lose that delicate tone of sensibility that put them into a kind of unison and vibration with every object around us: for it is certainly true, what has been said of one part of our species, and may almost with equal justice be applied to the whole,

"That to their weakness half their charms we owe."

I remember Dr Tissot told me, he had a patient that actually died for love of Christ; and when in the last extremity, seemed still to enjoy the greatest happiness; calling upon him with all the fondness of the most enthusiastic passion. And from what I have often observed before the statues of the Virgin and St Agatha, I am persuaded, they have many inamoratos that would willingly lay down their lives for them.

Now, pray don't you think too, that this personal kind of worship is much better adapted to the capacities of the vulgar than the more pure and sublime modes of it which would only distract and confound their simple understandings, unaccustomed to speculation; and that certainly require something gross and material, some object of sense to fix their attention?—This even seems to have been the opinion of the sacred writers, who often represent God under some material form.

Were you to attempt to give a country-fellow an idea of the Deity; were you to tell him of a being that is immaterial, and yet whose essence penetrates all matter: who has existed from all eternity, and whose extension is equally boundless with his duration; who fills and pervades millions of worlds, and animates every object

they contain; and who, in the sublime language of our poet,

" Though changed through all, is yet in all the same,
" Great in the earth, as in the etherial frame:
" Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,
" Glows in the stars, and blossoms in the trees;
" Lives through all life, extends through all extent;
" Spreads undivided, operates unspent.
" To him no high, no low, no great, no small;
" He fills, he bounds, connects, and equals all."

Now, what do you imagine he would think of such a being? I am afraid his understanding would be so bewildered, that he could not think at all. But set up before him the figure of a fine woman, with a beautiful child in her arms, the most interesting object in nature; and tell him she can procure him every thing he wants; he knows perfectly well what he is about; feels himself animated by the object, and prays to her with all his might.

Adieu.—We are going to be very busy; and are preparing every thing for one of the greatest objects of our expedition, the examination of Mount Ætna. Indeed, we have received but bad encouragement; and are beginning to doubt of the possibility of success. Recupero tells us, that the season is not far enough advanced yet, by some months; and that he does not think it will be possible to get near the summit of the mountain. The last winter, he says, was so uncommonly severe, that the circle of snow extended much nearer the foot of the mountain than usual; that, although the circle is now greatly contracted, it still extends nine or ten miles below the crater.—He advises us to return this way in the month of August; and, if possible, make Ætna the last part of our expedition. If we do not succeed to-morrow, we shall probably

follow his advice; but we are determined to make a bold push for it. The weather is the most favourable that can be imagined: here is a delightful evening, and by the star-light we can observe the smoke rolling down the side of the mountain like a vast torrent. Recupero says, this is a sure indication of the violence of the cold in these exalted regions of the atmosphere, which condenses the vapour, and makes it fall down the moment it issues out of the crater. He advises us, by all means, to provide plenty of *liquors*, warm fur cloaks, and hatchets to cut wood; as we shall probably be obliged to pass the night in the open air, in a climate, he assures us, as cold as that of Greenland. It is very singular if this be true; for at present we are melting with heat, in thin suits of taffeta. Adieu. You shall know it all on our return, if we do not share the fate of Empedocles. Ever yours.

LETTER IX.

Catania, May 29.

ON the 27th, by day-break, we set off to visit Mount Ætna, that venerable and respectable father of mountains. His base, and his immense declivities are covered with a numerous progeny of his own; for every great eruption produces a new mountain; and perhaps, by the number of these, better than by any other method, the number of eruptions, and the age of Ætna itself, might be ascertained.

The whole mountain is divided into three distinct regions, called *La Regione Culta* or *Piedmontese*, the Fertile Region; *La Regione Sylvosa* or *Nemorosa*, the

Woody Region; and *La Regione Deserta* or *Scoperta*, the Barren Region.

These three are as different, both in climate and productions, as the three zones of the earth; and perhaps, with equal propriety, might have been styled the Torrid, the Temperate, and the Frigid zone. The first region surrounds the mountain, and constitutes the most fertile country in the world on all sides of it, to the extent of about fourteen or fifteen miles, where the woody region begins. It is composed almost entirely of lava, which, after a number of ages, is at last converted into the most fertile of all soils.

At Nicolosi, which is twelve miles up the mountain, we found the barometer at 27 : 1½ : at Catania it stood at 29 : 8½; although the former elevation is not very great, probably not exceeding 3000 feet, yet the climate was totally changed. At Catania, the harvest was entirely over, and the heats were insupportable; here they were moderate, and in many places the corn is as yet green. The road for these twelve miles is the worst I ever travelled; entirely over old lavas and the mouths of extinguished volcanoes, now converted into corn-fields, vineyards, and orchards.

The fruit of this region is reckoned the finest in Sicily, particularly the figs, of which they have a great variety. One of these, of a very large size, esteemed superior in flavour to all the rest, they pretend is peculiar to Ætna.

The lavas, which as I have already said form this region of the mountain, take their rise from an infinite number of the most beautiful little mountains on earth, which are every where scattered on the immense declivity of Ætna. These are all of a regular figure; either that of a cone, or a semisphere; and all but a very few

are covered with beautiful trees, and the richest verdure: every eruption generally forms one of these mountains. As the great crater of Ætna itself is raised to such an enormous height above the lower regions of the mountain, it is not possible, that the internal fire raging for a vent, even round the base, and no doubt vastly below it, should be carried to the height of twelve or thirteen thousand feet, for probably so high is the summit of Ætna. It has therefore generally happened, that after shaking the mountain and its neighbourhood for some time, it at last bursts open its side, and this is called an eruption. At first it only sends forth a thick smoke and showers of ashes, that lay waste the adjacent country: these are soon followed by red-hot stones, and rocks of a great size, thrown to an immense height in the air. The fall of these stones, together with the quantities of ashes discharged at the same time, at last form the spherical and conical mountains I have mentioned. Sometimes this process is finished in the course of a few days, sometimes it lasts for months, which was the case in the great eruption 1669. In that case, the mountain formed is of a great size; some of them are not less than seven or eight miles round, and upwards of 1000 feet in perpendicular height; others are not more than two or three miles round, and 300 or 400 feet high.

After the new mountain is formed, the lava generally bursts out from its lower side; and bearing every thing before it, is for the most part terminated by the sea. This is the common progress of an eruption; however, it sometimes happens, though rarely, that the lava bursts at once from the side of the mountain, without all these attending circumstances; and this is commonly the case with the eruptions of Vesuvius, where

the elevation being so much smaller, the melted matter is generally carried up into the crater of the mountain, which then exhibits the phenomena I have described; discharging showers of stones and ashes from the mouth of the volcano, without forming any new mountain, but only adding considerably to the height of the old one; till at last the lava, rising near the summit, bursts the side of the crater, and the eruption is declared. This has literally been the case with two eruptions I have been an attentive witness of in that mountain: but Ætna is upon a much larger scale, and one crater is not enough to give vent to such oceans of liquid fire.

Recupero assures me, he saw in an eruption of that mountain, large rocks of fire discharged to the height of some thousand feet, with a noise much more terrible than that of thunder. He measured from the time of their greatest elevation till they reached the ground, and found they took twenty-one seconds to descend; which, according to the rule of the spaces, being as the squares of the times, amounts, I think, to upwards of 7000 feet,—a most astonishing height surely, and requiring a force of projection beyond what we have any conception of. I measured the height of the explosions of Vesuvius by the same rule, and never observed any of the stones thrown from it to take more than nine seconds to descend, which shews they had risen to little more than 1200 feet.

Our landlord at Nicolosi gave us an account of the singular fate of the beautiful country near Hybla, at no great distance from hence. It was so celebrated for its fertility, and particularly for its honey, that it was called Mel Passi, till it was overwhelmed by the lava of Ætna; and having then become totally barren, by a kind of pun its name was changed to Mal Passi. In a

second eruption, by a shower of ashes from the mountain, it soon re-assumed its ancient beauty and fertility, and for many years was called Bel Passi. Last of all, the unfortunate æra of 1669, it was again laid under an ocean of fire, and reduced to the most wretched sterility, since which time it is known again by its second appellation of Mal Passi. However, the lava, in its course over this beautiful little country, has left several little islands or hillocks, just enough to shew what it formerly was. These make a singular appearance, in all the bloom of the most luxuriant vegetation, surrounded and rendered almost inaccessible by large fields of black and rugged lava. The mountain from whence the first eruption issued, that covered Mel Passi, is known by the name of Monpelieri: I was struck with its beautiful appearance at a distance, and could not resist the desire I had of examining it minutely, as well as of observing the effects of the two eruptions that overwhelmed this celebrated country.

Monpelieri is rather of a spherical than a conical shape, and does not rise in perpendicular height above three hundred feet, but it is so perfectly regular on every side, and so richly overspread with fruits and flowers, that I could not leave so heavenly a spot without the greatest regret. Its cup or crater is large in proportion to the mountain, and is as exactly hollowed out as the best made bowl. I walked quite round its outward edge, and think the circumference must be somewhat more than a mile.

This mountain was formed by the first eruption that destroyed the country of Mel Passi, and is of a very old date. It buried a great number of villages and country-houses; and particularly two noble churches, which are more regretted than all the rest, on account

of three statues, reckoned at that time the most perfect in the island. They have attempted, but in vain, to recover them; as the spot where the churches stood could never be justly ascertained. Indeed it is impossible it should; for these churches were built of lava, which it is well known is immediately melted, when it comes into contact with a torrent of new erupted matter: and Massa says, that in some eruptions of Ætna, the lava has poured down with such a sudden impetuosity, that in the course of a few hours, churches, palaces and villages, have been entirely melted down, and the whole run off in fusion, without leaving the least mark of their former existence. But if the lava has had any considerable time to cool, this singular effect never happens.

The great eruption of 1669, after shaking the whole country around for four months, and forming a very large mountain of stones and ashes, burst out about half a mile above Monpelieri, and descending like a torrent, bore directly against the middle of the mountain, and (they pretend) perforated it from side to side: this, however, I doubt, as it must have broken the regular form of the mountain, which is not the case. But certain it is, that it pierced to a great depth. The lava then divided into two branches; and surrounding this mountain, joined again on its south side; and laying waste the whole country betwixt that and Catania, scaled the walls of that city, and poured its flaming torrent into the ocean. In its way, it is said to have destroyed the possessions of near 30,000 people, and reduced them to beggary. It formed several hills where there were formerly valleys, and filled up a large lake, of which there is not now the least vestige to be seen.

As the events of this eruption are better known than any other, they tell a great many singular stories of it: one of which, however incredible it may appear, is well ascertained. A vineyard, belonging to a convent of Jesuits, lay directly on its way. This vineyard was formed on an ancient lava, probably a thin one, with a number of caverns and crevices under it. The liquid lava entering into these caverns, soon filled them up, and by degrees bore up the vineyard; and the Jesuits, who every moment expected to see it buried, beheld with amazement the whole field begin to move off. It was carried on the surface of the lava to a considerable distance; and though the greatest part was destroyed, yet some of it remains to this day.

We went to examine the mouth from whence the dreadful torrent issued, and were surprised to find it only a small hole, of about three or four yards diameter. The mountain from whence it sprung, I think, is little less than the conical part of Vesuvius.

There is a vast cavern on the opposite side of it, where people go to shoot wild pigeons, which breed there in great abundance. The innermost parts of this cavern are so very dismal and gloomy, that our landlord told us some people had lost their senses from having advanced too far, imagining they saw devils and the spirits of the damned; for it is still very generally believed here, that Ætna is the mouth of hell.

We found a degree of wildness and ferocity in the inhabitants of this mountain, that I have not observed any where else. It put me in mind of an observation the Padre della Torre (the historiographer of Mount Vesuvius) told me he had often made in the confines of Naples; that in the places where the air is most impregnated with sulphur and hot exhalations, the

people were always most wicked and vicious. Whatever truth there may be in the observation, the people about Nicolosi at least seem to confirm it. The whole village flocked round us, and the women in particular abused us exceedingly; the cause of which we at last found was, that F——'s blooming complexion and white skin had made them take him for one of their own sex. They made a great clamour, and it was with difficulty we could appease them. The person whom Recupero had appointed to accompany us, known by the name of the Cyclops, (the man in the island that is best acquainted with Mount Ætna), was ordered by them not to go with us; and if we had not at last obtained their consent by soothing and flattery, the best method with women, he durst not have disobeyed them. At first we had been obliged to shut the gate of the court, they were so very noisy and tumultuous; but when our landlord, (a priest), for whom we had letters from Catania, assured them that we were Christians, and came with no bad intentions, they became more moderate, and we ventured out amongst them.—This confidence soon acquired theirs; and in a short time we became good friends, and had a great deal of conversation.

It was with much difficulty I could persuade them that we were not come to search for hidden treasures, a great quantity of which they believe is to be found in Monpelieri; and when I went to that mountain they were then fully convinced that this was our intention. Two of the men followed me, and kept a close eye on every step that I took: and when I lifted any bit of lava or pumice, they came running up, thinking it was something very precious; but when they observed they were only bits of stone, and that I put them into my

pocket, they laughed heartily, talking to one another in their mountain jargon, which is unintelligible even to Italians. However, as most of them speak Italian so as to be understood, they asked me what I was going to make of these bits of stone? I told them they were of a great value in our country; that the people there had a way of making gold of them: at this they both seemed surprised, and spoke again in their tongue. However, I found they did not believe me: one of them told me, if that had been true, I certainly would not have been so ready in telling it: but, said he, if it is so, we will serve you for ever, if you will teach us that art; for then we shall be the richest people on earth. I assured them that I had not yet learned it myself, and that it was a secret known only to a very few. They were likewise a good deal surprised to see me pull out of my pocket a magnetical needle and a small electrometer, which I had prepared at Catania to examine the electrical state of the air; and I was afraid they should have taken me for a conjurer, (which you know already happened amongst the Appenines), but luckily that idea did not strike them.

On our way back to Nicolosi we were joined by three or four more, with their wives. I began to be a little afraid of myself, lest they should insist on knowing the secret. However, I took out my bits of lava, and told them they were at their service, if they had any occasion for them. But they refused them, saying, they wished to the Virgin and St Agatha that I could take away the whole of it; as it had ruined the finest country in all Sicily.

One fellow, who assumed an air of superior wisdom and dignity to the rest, made them form a circle round him, and began to interrogate me with great gravity

and composure. It was with difficulty I could keep my countenance; but as I was alone with them, at some distance from the village, I was afraid of offending them. He desired me to answer him with truth and precision, what were the real motives of our coming so fatiguing and disagreeable a journey? I told him, on my word, that we had no other motive but curiosity to examine Mount Ætna. On which, laughing to one another with great contempt, *Un bel ragion questo, non e vero*, said they, (a very pretty reason truly). The old fellow then asked me what country we were of. I told him we were *Inglese*. *E dove? loro paese*, said he; whereabouts does their country lie? I told him it was a great way off, on the other side of the world. *Da vero*, said the fellow, *e credono in Christo quelli Inglese?*—I told him (laughing) that they did. Ah, said he, shaking his head, *miſare chenon credono troppo.*—One of the company then observed, that he remembered several of these Inglese, that at different times had paid visits to Mount Ætna, and that they never could find out their motive; but that he recollected very well to have heard many of their old people say, that the Inglese had a queen that had burnt in the mountain for many years past; and that they supposed these visits were made from some devotion or respect to her memory. I assured them that the Inglese had but too little respect for their queens when they were alive, but that they never troubled themselves about them after they were dead: however, as all the others confirmed this testimony, I thought it was safest to say little against it; but I was extremely curious to know who this queen might be. They alleged that I knew much better than they; but added that her name was Anna.

I could not conceive what Queen Anne had done to bring her there; and was puzzling myself to find it out, when one of them soon cleared up the matter; he told me she was wife to a king that had been a Christian, and that she had made him an heretic, and was in consequence condemned to burn for ever in Mount Ætna. In short, I found it was no other than poor Anne Boleyn. As soon as I mentioned the name, *Si signor*, said the fellow, *Pistessa, Pistessa, la conosce meglio che noi.* I asked if her husband was there too, for that he deserved it much better than she: *sicuro*, said he, and all his heretic subjects too; and if you are of that number, you need not be in such a hurry to get thither, you will be sure of it at last. I thanked him, and went to join our company, not a little amused with the conversation.

We soon after left Nicolosi, and in an hour and a half's travelling, over barren ashes and lava, we arrived on the confines of the Regione Sylvosa, or the Temperate Zone. As soon as we entered these delightful forests, we seemed to have got into another world. The air, which before was sultry and hot, was now cool and refreshing; and every breeze was loaded with a thousand perfumes, the whole ground being covered over with the richest aromatic plants. Many parts of this region are surely the most heavenly spots upon earth; and if Ætna resembles hell within, it may with equal justice be said to resemble paradise without.

It is indeed a curious consideration, that this mountain should re-unite every beauty and every horror; and, in short, all the most opposite and dissimilar objects in nature. Here you observe a gulf, that formerly threw out torrents of fire, now covered with the most luxuriant vegetation; and from an object of terror, become one of delight. Here you gather the most

delicious fruit, rising from what was but lately a black and barren rock. Here the ground is covered with every flower; and we wander over these beauties, and contemplate this wilderness of sweets, without considering that hell, with all its terrors, is immediately under our feet; and that but a few yards separates us from lakes of liquid fire and brimstone.

But our astonishment still increases, on casting our eyes on the higher regions of the mountain. There we behold in perpetual union the two elements that are at perpetual war; an immense gulf of fire, for ever existing in the midst of snows which it has not power to melt; and immense fields of snow and ice for ever surrounding this gulf of fire, which they have not power to extinguish.

The woody region of Ætna ascends for about eight or nine miles, and forms a zone or girdle of the brightest green all around the mountain. This night we passed through little more than the half of it; arriving some time before sun-set at our lodgings, which was no other than a large cave, formed by one of the most ancient and venerable lavas. It is called *La Spelonca del Capriole*, or the goats cavern, because frequented by those animals, who take refuge there in bad weather.

Here we were delighted with the contemplation of many grave and beautiful objects; the prospect on all sides is immense; and we already seem to be lifted from the earth, and to have got into a new world.

Our cavern is surrounded by the stately and majestic oaks; of the dry leaves of which, we made very comfortable beds; and with our hatchets, which we had brought on purpose, we had cut down great branches, and, in a short time, had a fire large enough to roast an ox. I observed my thermometer, and found,

from 71 at Nicolosi, it had now fallen below 60. The barometer stood at 24 : 2. In one end of our cave we still found a great quantity of snow, which seemed to be sent there on purpose for us, as there was no water to be found. With this we filled our tea-kettle, as tea and bread and butter was the only supper we had provided; and probably the best one to prevent us from being overcome by sleep or fatigue.

Not a great way from this cavern, are two of the most beautiful mountains of all that number that spring from Ætna. I mounted one of our best mules, and with a good deal of difficulty arrived at the summit of the highest of them, just a little before sun-set. The prospect of Sicily, with the surrounding sea and all its islands, was wonderfully noble. The whole course of the river Semetus, the ruins of Hybla, and several other ancient towns; the rich corn-fields and vineyards on the lower region of the mountain, and the amazing number of beautiful mountains below, made a delightful scene. The hollow craters of these two mountains are each of them considerably larger than that of Vesuvius. They are now filled with stately oaks, and covered to a great depth with the richest soil. I observed that this region of Ætna, like the former, is composed of lava; but this is now covered so deep with earth, that it is no where to be seen, but in the beds of the torrents. In many of these it is worn down by the water to the depth of fifty or sixty feet, and in one of them still considerably more.—What an idea does this give of the amazing antiquity of the eruptions of this mountain?

As soon as it was dark, we retired to our cave, and took possession of our bed of leaves. Our rest, however, was somewhat disturbed by the noise of a moun-

tain that lay a good way off on our right. It discharged quantities of smoke, and made several explosions like heavy cannon at a distance; but what is singular, we could observe no appearance of fire.—This mountain was formed by an eruption in 1766, now upwards of four years ago; the fire of which is not yet extinguished, neither is the lava by any means cold. This lava spent its fury on a beautiful forest, which is laid waste to the extent of a good many miles. In many places it has run into gulleys of a great depth, which it has filled up to the height, we are told, of two hundred feet. It is in these places that it retains the greatest heat. On our road to-day, we scrambled up this lava, and went a considerable way over its surface, which appeared perfectly cold; but it is certain, that in many places it still emits volumes of smoke, particularly after rain; and the people say, what I can readily believe, that this will continue to be the case for some years, where the lava is thickest. A solid body of fire some hundreds of feet thick, and of so great an extent, must certainly retain its heat for many years. The surface, indeed, soon becomes black and hard, and incloses the liquid fire within, in a kind of solid box, excluding all impressions from the external air or from the weather. Thus I have seen, many months after eruptions of Mount Vesuvius, a bed of lava, though only of a few feet thick, has continued red-hot in the centre long after the surface was cold; and a stick thrust into its crevices instantly took fire, although there was no perceptible heat without.

Massa, a Sicilian author of credit, says he was at Catania eight years after the great eruption in 1669, and that he still found the lava in many places was *not* cold: but there is an easy method of calculating the

time that bodies take to cool:—Sir Isaac Newton, I think, in his account of the comet of 1680, supposes the times to be as the squares of their diameters; and finding that a solid ball of metal of two inches, made red-hot, required upwards of an hour to become perfectly cold, made the calculation from that to a body of the diameter of the earth, and found it would require upwards of twenty thousand years. If this rule be just, you may easily compute the time that the lava will take to become thoroughly cold; and that you may have time to do so, I shall here break off my letter, which I am obliged to write in bed, in a very awkward and disagreeable posture; the cause of which shall be explained to you in my next. Adieu. Ever yours.

LETTER X.

Catania, May 29. at night.

AFTER getting a comfortable nap on our bed of leaves in the Spelonca del Capriole, we awoke about eleven o'clock; and melting down a sufficient quantity of snow, we boiled our tea-kettle, and made a hearty meal to prepare us for the remaining part of our expedition. We were nine in number; for we had our three servants, the Cyclops (our conductor) and two men to take care of our mules. The Cyclops now began to display his great knowledge of the mountain, and we followed him with implicit confidence. He conducted us over "Antres vast, and Deserts wild," where scarce human foot had ever trod. Sometimes through gloomy forests, which by day-light were delightful, but now, from the universal darkness, the

rustling of the trees; the heavy dull bellowing of the mountain, the vast expanse of ocean stretched at an immense distance below us, inspired a kind of awful horror. Sometimes we found ourselves ascending great rocks of lava, where, if our mules should make but a false step, we might be thrown headlong over the precipice. However, by the assistance of the Cyclops, we overcame all these difficulties; and he managed matters so well, that in the space of two hours we found we had got above the regions of vegetation; and had left the forests of Ætna far behind. These appeared now like a dark and gloomy gulf below us, that surrounded the mountain.

The prospect before us was of a very different nature; we beheld an expanse of snow and ice that alarmed us exceedingly, and almost staggered our resolution. In the centre of this, but still at a great distance, we descried the high summit of the mountain, rearing its tremendous head, and vomiting out torrents of smoke. It indeed appeared altogether inaccessible, from the vast extent of the fields of snow and ice that surrounded it. Our diffidence was still increased by the sentiments of the Cyclops. He told us, it often happened, that the surface of the mountain being hot below melted the snow in particular spots, and formed pools of water, where it was impossible to foresee our danger; that it likewise happened that the surface of the water, as well as the snow, was sometimes covered with black ashes, that rendered it exceedingly deceitful; that however, if we thought proper, he should lead us on with as much caution as possible. Accordingly, after holding a council of war, which you know people generally do when they are much afraid, we detached our cavalry to the forest below, and prepared to climb the snows. The

Cyclops, after taking a great draught of brandy, desired us to be of good cheer; that we had plenty of time, and might take as many rests as we pleased; that the snow could be little more than seven miles, and that we should certainly be able to pass it before sun-rise. Accordingly, taking each of us a dram of liquor, which soon removed every objection, we began our march.

The ascent for some time was not steep; and as the surface of the snow sunk a little, we had tolerable good footing; but as it soon began to grow steeper, we found our labour greatly increased: however, we determined to persevere, calling to mind in the midst of our labour, that the emperor Adrian, and the philosopher Plato had undergone the same; and from the same motive too, to see the rising sun from the top of Ætna. After incredible labour and fatigue, but at the same time mixed with a great deal of pleasure, we arrived before dawn at the ruins of an ancient structure, called *Il Torre del Filosofo*, supposed to have been built by the philosopher Empedocles, who took up his habitation here, the better to study the nature of Mount Ætna. By others it is supposed to be the ruins of a temple of Vulcan, whose shop, all the world knows (where he used to make excellent thunderbolts and celestial armour, as well as nets to catch his wife when she went astray) was ever kept in Mount Ætna. Here we rested ourselves for some time, and made a fresh application to our liquor bottle, which I am persuaded, both Vulcan and Empedocles, had they been here, would have greatly approved of after such a march.

I found the mercury had fallen to 26 : 6. We had now to pay our adorations in a silent contemplation of the sublime objects of nature. The sky was clear, and the immense vault of the heavens appeared in awful

majesty and splendour. We found ourselves more struck with veneration than below, and at first were at a loss to know the cause; till we observed with astonishment the number of stars seemed to be infinitely increased; and the light of each of them appeared brighter than usual. The whiteness of the milky way was like a pure flame that shot across the heavens; and with the naked eye we could observe clusters of stars that were invisible in the regions below. We did not at first attend to the cause, nor recollect that we had now passed through ten or twelve thousand feet of gross vapour, that blunts and confuses every ray, before it reaches the surface of the earth. We were amazed at the distinctness of vision, and exclaimed together, what a glorious situation for an observatory! Had Empedocles had the eyes of Gallileo, what discoveries must he not have made! We regretted that Jupiter was not visible, as I am persuaded we might have discovered some of his satellites with the naked eye, or at least with a small glass which I had in my pocket. We observed a light a great way below us on the mountain, which seemed to move among the forest; but whether an Ignis Fatuus, or what it was, I shall not pretend to say. We likewise took notice of several of those meteors, called Falling Stars, which still appeared to be as much elevated above us, as when we see from the plain; so that, in all probability, those bodies move in regions much beyond the bounds that some philosophers have assigned to our atmosphere.

After contemplating these objects for some time, we set off, and soon arrived at the foot of the great crater of the mountain. This is of an exact conical figure, and rises equally on all sides. It is composed solely of ashes and other burnt materials, discharged from the

mouth of the volcano, which is in its centre. This conical mountain is of a very great size; its circumference cannot be less than ten miles. Here we took a second rest, as the greatest part of our fatigue still remained. The mercury had fallen to 20 : 4½.—We found this mountain excessively steep; and although it had appeared black, yet it was likewise covered with snow, but the surface (luckily for us) was spread over with a pretty thick layer of ashes, thrown out from the crater. Had it not been for this, we never should have been able to get to the top; as the snow was every where frozen hard and solid, from the piercing cold of the air.

In about an hour's climbing, we arrived at a place where there was no snow; and where a warm and comfortable vapour issued from the mountain, which induced us to make another halt. Here I found the mercury at 19 : 6½. The thermometer was fallen three degrees below the point of congelation; and before we left the summit of Ætna, it fell two degrees more, viz. to 27. From this spot it was only about three hundred yards to the highest summit of the mountain, where we arrived in full time to see the most wonderful and most sublime sight in nature.

But here description must ever fall short; for no imagination has dared to form an idea of so glorious and so magnificent a scene. Neither is there on the surface of this globe, any one point that unites so many awful and sublime objects.—The immense elevation from the surface of the earth, drawn as it were to a single point, without any neighbouring mountain for the senses and imagination to rest upon, and recover from their astonishment in their way down to the world. This point or pinnacle, raised on the brink of a bottomless gulf,

as old as the world, often discharging rivers of fire, and throwing out burning rocks, with a noise that shakes the whole island. Add to this, the unbounded extent of the prospect, comprehending the greatest diversity and the most beautiful scenery in nature; with the rising sun, advancing in the east, to illuminate the wonderous scene.

The whole atmosphere by degrees kindled up, and shewed dimly and faintly the boundless prospect around. Both sea and land looked dark and confused, as if only emerging from their original chaos, and light and darkness seemed still undivided; till the morning by degrees advancing, completed the separation. The stars are extinguished, and the shades disappear. The forests, which but now seemed black and bottomless gulfs, from whence no ray was reflected to shew their form or colours, appear a new creation rising to the sight; catching life and beauty from every increasing beam. The scene still enlarges, and the horizon seems to widen and expand itself on all sides; till the sun, like the great Creator, appears in the east, and with his plastic ray completes the mighty scene.—All appears enchantment; and it is with difficulty we can believe we are still on earth. The senses, unaccustomed to the sublimity of such a scene, are bewildered and confounded; and it is not till after some time, that they are capable of separating and judging of the objects that compose it.—The body of the sun is seen rising from the ocean, immense tracts both of sea and land intervening; the islands of Lipari, Panari, Alicudi, Strombolo, and Volcano, with their smoking summits, appear under your feet; and you look down on the whole of Sicily as on a map; and can trace every river through all its windings, from its source to its mouth. The view is

absolutely boundless on every side; nor is there any one object, within the circle of vision, to interrupt it; so that the sight is every where lost in the immensity; and I am persuaded it is only from the imperfection of our organs, that the coasts of Africa, and even of Greece, are not discovered, as they are certainly above the horizon. The circumference of the visible horizon on the top of Ætna cannot be less than two thousand miles. At Malta, which is near two hundred miles distant, they perceive all the eruptions from the second region; and that island is often discovered from about one-half the elevation of the mountain; so that at the whole elevation, the horizon must extend to near double that distance, or four hundred miles, which makes eight hundred miles for the diameter of the circle, and two thousand four hundred for the circumference. But this is by much too vast for our senses, not intended to grasp so boundless a scene. I find, indeed, by some of the Sicilian authors, particularly Massa, that the African coast, as well as that of Naples, with many of its islands, have been discovered from the top of Ætna. Of this, however, we cannot boast, though we can very well believe it. Indeed, if we knew the height of the mountain, it would be easy to calculate the extent of its visible horizon; and (*vice versa*) if its visible horizon was exactly ascertained, it would be an easy matter to calculate the height of the mountain.—But the most beautiful part of the scene is certainly the mountain itself; the island of Sicily, and the numerous islands lying round it. All these, by a kind of magic in vision, that I am at a loss to account for, seem as if they were brought close round the skirts of Ætna; the distances appearing reduced to nothing.—Perhaps this singular effect is produced by the rays of light passing from a

rarer medium into a denser; which (from a well-known law in optics) to an observer in the rare medium, appears to lift up objects that are at the bottom of the dense one; as a piece of money placed in a bason appears lifted up as soon as the bason is filled with water.

The *Regione Deserta*, or the frigid zone of Ætna, is the first object that calls your attention. It is marked out by a circle of snow and ice, which extends on all sides to the distance of about eight miles. In the centre of this circle, the great crater of the mountain rears its burning head; and the regions of intense cold and of intense heat seem for ever to be united in the same point.—On the north side of the snowy region, they assure us, there are several small lakes that are never thawed; and that in many places, the snow, mixed with the ashes and salts of the mountain, is accumulated to a vast depth: and indeed I suppose the quantity of the salts, contained in this mountain, is one great reason of the preservation of its snows. The *Regione Deserta* is immediately succeeded by the *Sylvosa*, or the woody region, which forms a circle or girdle of the most beautiful green, which surrounds the mountain on all sides, and is certainly one of the most delightful spots on earth. This presents a remarkable contrast with the desert region. It is not smooth and even, like the greatest part of the latter; but is finely variegated by an infinite number of those beautiful little mountains that have been formed by the different eruptions of Ætna. All these have now acquired a wonderful degree of fertility, except a very few that are but newly formed; that is, within these five or six hundred years: for it certainly requires some thousands to bring them to their greatest degree

of perfection. We looked down into the craters of these, and attempted, but in vain, to number them.

The circumference of this zone or great circle on Ætna is not less than seventy or eighty miles. It is every where succeeded by the vineyards, orchards, and corn-fields that compose the *Regione Culta*, or the fertile region. This last zone is much broader than the others, and extends on all sides to the foot of the mountain. Its whole circumference, according to Recupero, is 183 miles. It is likewise covered with a number of little conical and spherical mountains, and exhibits a wonderful variety of forms and colours, and makes a delightful contrast with the other two regions. It is bounded by the sea to the south and south-east, and on all its other sides by the rivers Semetus and Alcantara, which run almost round it. The whole course of these rivers is seen at once, and all their beautiful windings through these fertile valleys, looked upon as the favourite possession of Ceres herself, and the very scene of the rape of her daughter Proserpine.

Cast your eyes a little farther, and you embrace the whole island, and see all its cities, rivers, and mountains, delineated in the great chart of Nature: All the adjacent islands, the whole coast of Italy, as far as your eye can reach; for it is no where bounded, but every where lost in the space. On the sun's first rising, the shadow of the mountain extends across the whole island, and makes a large track visible even in the sea and in the air. By degrees this is shortened, and, in a little time, is confined only to the neighbourhood of Ætna.

We had now time to examine a fourth region of that wonderful mountain, very different, indeed, from the others, and productive of very different sensations; but

which has, undoubtedly, given being to all the rest; I mean the region of fire.

The present crater of this immense volcano is a circle of about three miles and a half in circumference. It goes shelving down on each side, and forms a regular hollow like a vast amphitheatre. From many places of this space, issue volumes of sulphureous smoke, which, being much heavier than the circumambient air, instead of rising in it, as smoke generally does, immediately on its getting out of the crater, rolls down the side of the mountain like a torrent, till coming to that part of the atmosphere of the same specific gravity with itself, it shoots off horizontally, and forms a large track in the air, according to the direction of the wind; which, happily for us, carried it exactly to the side opposite to that where we were placed. The crater is so hot, that it is very dangerous, if not impossible, to go down into it; besides, the smoke is very incommodious, and in many places, the surface is so soft, there have been instances of people sinking down in it, and paying for their temerity with their lives. Near the centre of the crater is the great mouth of the volcano;—that tremendous gulf so celebrated in all ages, looked upon as the terror and scourge both of this and another life; and equally useful to ancient poets or to modern divines, when the muse, or when the spirit inspires. We beheld it with awe and with horror, and were not surprised that it had been considered as the place of the damned. When we reflect on the immensity of its depth, the vast cells and caverns whence so many lavas have issued; the force of its internal fire, to raise up those lavas to so vast a height, to support as it were in the air, and even to force it over the very summit of the crater, with all the dreadful accompaniments; the boil-

ing of the matter, the shaking of the mountain, the explosions of flaming rocks, &c. we must allow that the most enthusiastic imagination, in the midst of all its terrors, hardly ever formed an idea of a hell more dreadful.

It was with a mixture both of pleasure and pain, that we quitted this awful scene. But the wind had risen very high, and clouds began to gather round the mountain. In a short time they formed like another heaven below us, and we were in hopes of seeing a thunder-storm under our feet;—a scene that is not uncommon in these exalted regions, and which I have already seen on the top of the high Alps; but the clouds were soon dispelled again by the force of the wind, and we were disappointed in our expectations.

I had often been told of the great effect produced by discharging a gun on the top of high mountains. I tried it here, when we were a good deal surprised to find, that instead of increasing the sound, it was almost reduced to nothing. The report was not equal to that of a pocket pistol; we compared it to the stroke of a stick on a door; and surely it is consistent with reason, that the thinner the air is, the less its impression must be on the ear; for in a vacuum there can be no noise, or no impression can be made; and the nearer the approach to a vacuum, the impression must always be the smaller. Where those great effects have been produced, it must have been amongst a number of mountains, where the sound is reverberated from one to the other.

When we arrived at the foot of the cone, we observed some rocks of an incredible size, that have been discharged from the crater. The largest that has been observed from Vesuvius, is a round one of about twelve

feet diameter. These are much greater; indeed almost in proportion of the mountains to each other.

On our arrival at the Torre del Filosofo, we could not help admiring, that the ruins of this structure have remained uncovered for so many ages, so near the top of Ætna, when thousands of places at a great distance from it have been repeatedly buried by its lavas, in a much shorter time,—a proof that few eruptions have risen so high in the mountain.

Empedocles was a native of Agrigentum, and is supposed to have died 400 years before the Christian æra. Perhaps his vanity more than his philosophy led him to this elevated situation; nay, it is said to have carried him still much farther:—That he might be looked upon as a god, and that the people might suppose he was taken up to heaven, he is recorded to have thrown himself headlong into the great gulf of Mount Ætna, never supposing that his death could be discovered to mankind; but the treacherous mountain threw out his slippers, which were of brass, and announced to the world the fate of the philosopher, who, by his death, as well as life, wanted only to impose upon mankind, and make them believe that he was greater than they.

However, if there is such a thing as philosophy on earth, this surely ought to be its seat. The prospect is little inferior to that from the summit, and the mind enjoys a degree of serenity here, that even few philosophers, I believe, could ever boast of on that tremendous point.—All Nature lies expanded below your feet, in her gayest and most luxuriant dress, and you still behold united under one point of view, all the seasons of the year, and all the climates of the earth. The meditations are ever elevated in proportion to the grandeur and sublimity of the objects that surround us; and

here, where you have all nature to arouse your admiration, what mind can remain inactive?

It has likewise been observed, and from experience I can say with truth; that on the tops of the highest mountains, where the air is so pure and refined, and where there is not that immense weight of gross vapours pressing upon the body, the mind acts with greater freedom, and all the functions both of soul and body are performed in a superior manner. It would appear, that in proportion as we are raised above the habitations of men, all low and vulgar sentiments are left behind; and that the soul, in approaching the etherial regions, shakes off its earthly affections, and already acquires something of their celestial purity.—Here, where you stand under a serene sky, and behold, with equal serenity, the tempest and storm forming below your feet; the lightning, darting from cloud to cloud, and the thunder rolling round the mountain, and threatening with destruction the poor wretches below; the mind considers the little storms of the human passions as equally below her notice. Surely the situation alone is enough to inspire philosophy, and Empedocles had good reason for choosing it.

But, alas! how vain are all our reasonings! In the very midst of these meditations, my philosophy was at once overset, and in a moment I found myself relapsed into a poor miserable mortal; was obliged to own, that pain was the greatest of evils; and would have given the world to have been once more arrived at those humble habitations, which, but a moment before, I had looked down upon with such contempt.—In running over the ice, my leg folded under me, and I received so violent a sprain, that in a few minutes it swelled to a great degree, and I found myself unable to put my foot to

the ground. Every muscle and fibre was at that time chilled and froze by the extreme cold, the thermometer continuing still below the point of congelation. It was this circumstance I suppose, that made the pain so violent; for I lay a considerable time on the ice in great agony: however, in these exalted regions, it was impossible to have a horse, or a carriage of any kind; and your poor philosopher was obliged to hop on one leg, with two men supporting him, for several miles over the snow; and our wags here allege, that he left the greatest part of his philosophy behind him, for the use of Empedocles's heirs and successors.

I was happy to get to my mule, but when I once more found myself on our beds of leaves in the Spelonca del Capriole, I thought I was in paradise: So true it is, that a removal of pain is the greatest of pleasures. The agony I suffered had thrown me into a profuse sweat and a fever; however, in an instant I fell fast asleep, and in an hour and a half awaked in perfect health. We had an excellent dish of tea, the most refreshing and agreeable I ever drank in all my life.

We left the summit of the mountain about six o'clock, and it was eight at night before we reached Catania.—We observed, both with pleasure and pain, the change of the climate as we descended.—From the regions of the most rigid winter, we soon arrived at those of the most delightful spring. On first entering the forests, the trees were still bare as in December, not a single leaf to be seen; but after we had descended a few miles, we found ourselves in the mildest, and the softest of climates: the trees in full verdure, and the fields covered with all the flowers of the summer; but as soon as we got out of the woods, and entered the torrid zone, we found the heats altogether insupportable, and suffered dreadfully from them before we reached the city. On

the road I saw many mountains, which I intended to have visited, but my sprain put it out of my power. One of the most remarkable is called the *Monte Pelluse*, the lava of which destroyed the great aqueduct of Catania for eighteen miles. It has here and there left a few arches; but nothing of any consequence.

Not far from this mountain stands the *Monte Victoria*, one of the most beautiful of all the numerous family of Ætna. It is of a pretty large size, and perfectly regular, and seems to be in the gayest dress of any. Many of its trees, which, at a distance, we took to be oranges and citrons, appeared to be in full blow. It was the lava of this mountain that is said to have covered up the port of Ulysses, which is now three miles distant from the sea; but I should suppose this eruption to have been much older than either Ulysses or Troy.

On our arrival at Catania, we went immediately to bed, being exceedingly oppressed by the fatigue of our expedition; but still more by the violent heat of the day,—a day, in which, I think, I have enjoyed a greater degree of pleasure, and suffered a greater degree of pain, than in any other day of my life.

As my leg continues very much swelled, I am still confined to my room, and mostly, indeed, to my bed, from whence I have written you the greatest part of these two epistles, the enormous length of which I am ashamed of. However, as I have still omitted several articles that I intended to take notice of, I shall add a sequel to-morrow; and so conclude my account of Mount Ætna. Had it not been for this abominable sprain, that holds me fast by the foot, you probably had not got off so easily; but I am obliged to drop all further thoughts of climbing mountains, though there are many things I still wanted to examine. Adieu.

Ever yours.

LETTER XI.

Catania, May 30.

WE took care to regulate two barometers at the foot of the mountain; one of which was left with the Canonico Recupero, and the other we carried along with us. The former our friend assures us, had no sensible variation during our absence. We both left it, and found it at twenty-nine inches, eight lines and a half, English measure. On our arrival at Catania, the one we carried up with us had risen exactly to the same point.

I had likewise a good quicksilver thermometer, which I borrowed from the Neapolitan philosopher, the Padre della Torre, who furnished us with letters for this place, and would have accompanied us, could he have obtained leave of the king. It is made by Adams at London, and (as I myself proved) exactly graduated from the two points of freezing and boiling water. It is upon Fahrenheit's scale. I shall mark the heights in the different regions of Ætna, with the rules for estimating the elevation of mountains by the barometer, which, I am sorry to say, have been hitherto so very ill ascertained; Cassini, Bouger, and the others who have written on the subject, to the reproach of science, differing so much amongst themselves, that it is with difficulty we can come near the truth.

Ætna has often been measured, but I believe never with any degree of accuracy; and it is really a shame to the society established in this place, called the Ætnean Academy, whose original institution was to study

the nature and operations of this wonderful mountain. It was my full intention to have measured it geometrically; but I am sorry to say, although this is both the seat of an academy and university, yet there was no quadrant to be had. Of all the mountains I have ever seen, Ætna would be the easiest to measure, and with the greatest certainty, and perhaps the properest place on the globe to establish an exact rule of mensuration by the barometer. There is a beach of a vast extent, that begins exactly at the foot of the mountain, and runs for a great many miles along the coast. The sea-mark of this beach forms the meridian to the summit of the mountain. Here you are sure of a perfect level, and make the base of your triangle of what length you please. But unfortunately this mensuration has never been executed, at least with a tolerable degree of precision.

Kircher pretends to have measured it, and to have found it 4000 French toises in height; which is more than any of the Andes, or indeed than any mountain upon earth. The Italian mathematicians are still more absurd. Some of them make it eight miles, some six, and some four. Amici, the last, and I believe the best who has made the attempt, reduces it to 3 miles 264 paces; but even this must be exceedingly erroneous; and probably the perpendicular height of Ætna does not exceed 12,000 feet, or little more than two miles. I shall mark the different methods of determining heights by the barometer; and you may choose which you please. I believe the allowance in all of them, particularly in great elevations where the air is so exceedingly thin and light, is much too small. Mikeli, whose mensurations are esteemed more exact, has ever found it so Cassini allows, I think, ten French toises

of elevation for every line of mercury, adding one foot to each ten, two to the second, three to the third, and so on: But surely the weight of the air diminishes in a much greater proportion.

Boguer takes the difference of the logarithms of the height of the barometer in lines, (supposing these logarithms to consist only of five figures); from this difference he takes away a thirtieth part, and what remains he supposes to be the difference of elevation. I do not recollect his reason for the supposition; but the rule seems to be still more erroneous than the other, and has been entirely laid aside. I am told, that accurate experiments have been made at Geneva, to establish the mensuration with the barometer, but I have not yet been able to procure them. Mr de la Hire allows twelve toises four feet for the line of mercury: And Picart, one of the most exact French academicians, fourteen toises, or about ninety English feet.

Height of Fahrenheit's Thermometer.

At Catania, May 26, at mid-day, - -	76
Ditto, May 27, at five in the morning, -	72
At Nicolosi, 12 miles up the mountain, mid-day,	73
At the cave, called Spelonca del Capriole, in the second region, where there was still a considerable quantity of snow, at seven at night, -	61
In the same cave at half an hour past eleven, -	52
At the Torre del Filosofo, in the third region, at three in the morning, - - - - -	34½
At the foot of the crater of Ætna, - -	33
About half way up the crater, - - -	29
On the summit of Ætna, a little before sun-rise,	27

Height of the Barometer in inches and lines.

At the sea-side at Catania,	29	8½
At the village of Piedmonte, in the first region of Ætna,	27	8
At Nicolosi, in the same region,	27	1½
At the Castagno de Cento Cavalli, in the second region,	26	5½
At the Spelonca del Capriole, in the second region,	24	2
At the Torre del Filosofo, in the third region,	20	5
At the foot of the crater,	20	4½
Within about 300 yards of the summit,	19	6½
At the summit of Ætna, (supposed to be about)	19	4

The wind at the summit was so violent that I could not make the observation with perfect exactness; however, I am pretty certain that I was within half a line.

I own I did not believe we should find Ætna so high. I had heard indeed that it was higher than any of the Alps, but I never gave credit to it:—How great then was my astonishment to find that the mercury fell almost two inches lower than I had ever observed it on the very highest of the accessible Alps; at the same time I am persuaded there are many inaccessible points of the Alps, (particularly Mont Blanc), that are still much higher than Ætna.

I found the magnetical needle greatly agitated near the summit of the mountain; (the Padre della Torre told me he had made the same observation on Vesuvius); however, it always fixed at the north point, though it took longer time in fixing than below. But what Recupero told me happened to him, was very singular.—

Soon after the eruption 1755, he placed his compass on the lava. The needle, he says, to his great astonishment, was agitated with much violence for some considerable time, till at last it entirely lost its magnetical power, standing indiscriminately at every point of the compass; and this it never after recovered, till it was again touched with the loadstone.

The wind, and my unfortunate sprain together, in a great measure prevented our electrical experiments, on which we had built not a little: however, I found that round Nicolosi, and particularly on the top of Monpelieri, the air was in a very favourable state for electrical operations. Here the little pith-balls, when insolated, were sensibly affected, and repelled each other above an inch. I expected this electrical state of the air would have increased as we advanced on the mountain; but at the cave where we slept, I could observe no such effect. Perhaps it was owing to the exhalations from the trees and vegetables, which are there exceedingly luxuriant; whereas about Nicolosi, and round Monpelieri, there is hardly any thing but lava and dry hot sand.—Or perhaps it might be owing to the evening being farther advanced, and the dews beginning to fall. However, I have no doubt, that upon these mountains formed by eruption, where the air is strongly impregnated with sulphureous effluvia, great electrical discoveries might be made. And perhaps, of all the reasons assigned for the wonderful vegetation that is performed on this mountain, there is none that contributes so much towards it, as this constant electrical state of the air: For from a variety of experiments it has been found, that an increase of the electrical matter adds much to the progress of vegetation. It probably acts there in the same manner as on the animal body;—the

circulation we know is performed quicker; and the juices are driven through the small vessels with more ease and celerity. This has often been proved from the immediate removal of obstructions by electricity; and probably the rubbing with dry and warm flannel, esteemed so efficacious in such cases, is doing nothing more than exciting a great degree of electricity in the part; but it has likewise been demonstrated, by the common experiment of making water drop through a small capillary syphon, which the moment it is electrified runs in a full stream.—I have indeed very little doubt, that the fertility of our seasons depends as much on this quality in the air, as either on its heats or moisture.

Electricity will probably soon be considered as the great vivifying principle of Nature, by which she carries on most of her operations.—It is a fifth element, distinct from, and of a superior nature to the other four, which only compose the corporeal parts of matter: but this subtile active fluid is a kind of soul that pervades and quickens every particle of it.—When an equal quantity of this is diffused through the air, and over the face of the earth, every thing continues calm and quiet; but if by any accident one part of matter has acquired a greater quantity than another, the most dreadful consequences often ensue before the equilibrium can be restored.—Nature seems to fall into convulsions, and many of her works are destroyed:—All the great phenomena are produced; thunder, lightning, earthquakes, and whirlwinds: for I believe there is little doubt, that all these frequently depend on this sole cause. And again, if we look down from the sublime of nature to its minutiæ, we shall still find the same power acting, though perhaps in less legible characters; for as the knowledge of its operations are still in

its infancy, they are generally misunderstood, or ascribed to some other cause. However, I have no doubt, that in process of time these will be properly investigated; when mankind will wonder how much they have been in the dark. It will then possibly be found, that what we call sensibility of nerves, and many of those diseases that the faculty have as yet only invented names for, are owing to the body's being possessed of too large or too small a quantity of this subtile and active fluid; that very fluid, perhaps, that is the vehicle of all our feelings, and which they have so long searched for in vain in the nerves; for I have sometimes been led to think, that this sense was nothing else than a slighter kind of electric effect, to which the nerves serve as conductors; and that it is by the rapid circulation of this penetrating and animating fire that our sensations are performed. We all know, that in damp and hazy weather, when it seems to be blunted and absorbed by the humidity; when its activity is lost, and little or none of it can be collected; we ever find our spirits more languid, and our sensibility less acute: but in the sirocc wind at Naples, when the air seems totally deprived of it, the whole system is unstrung, and the nerves seem to lose both their tension and elasticity, till the north or west wind awakens the activity of this animating power, which soon restores the tone, and enlivens all nature, which seemed to droop and languish during its absence.

It is likewise well known, that there have been instances of the human body becoming electric without the mediation of any electrical substance, and even emitting sparks of fire with a disagreeable sensation, and an extreme degree of nervous sensibility.

About seven or eight years ago, a lady in Switzer-

land was affected in this manner, and though I was not able to learn all the particulars of her case, yet several Swiss gentlemen have confirmed to me the truth of the story.—She was uncommonly sensible of every change of weather, and had her electrical feelings strongest in a clear day, or during the passage of thunder-clouds, when the air is known to be replete with that fluid. Her case, like most others which the doctors can make nothing of, was decided to be a *nervous* one; for the real meaning of that term I take it to be only, that the physician does not understand what it is.

Two gentlemen of Geneva had a short experience of the same sort of complaint, though still in a much superior degree.—Professor Saussure and young Mr Jalabert, when travelling over one of the high Alps, were caught amongst thunder-clouds; and to their utter astonishment, found their bodies so full of electrical fire, that spontaneous flashes darted from their fingers with a crackling noise, and the same kind of sensation as when strongly electrified by art.—This was communicated by Mr Jalabert to the Academy of Sciences at Paris, I think, in the year 1763; and you will find it recorded in their memoirs.

It seems pretty evident, I think, that these feelings were owing to the bodies being possessed of too great a share of electric fire. This is an uncommon case; but I do not think it at all improbable, that many of our invalids, particularly the hypochondriac, and those we call *Malades Imaginaires*, owe their disagreeable feelings to the opposite cause, or the bodies being possessed of too small a quantity of this fire; for we find that a diminution of it in the air seldom fails to increase their uneasy sensations, and *vice versa*.

Perhaps it might be of service to these people to wear some electric substance next their skin, to defend the nerves and fibres from the damp or non-electric air. —I would propose a waistcoat of the finest flannel, which should be kept perfectly clean and dry; for the effluvia of the body, in case of any violent perspiration, will soon destroy its electric quality: this should be covered by another of the same size, of silk. The animal heat and the friction that exercise must occasion betwixt these two substances, produce a powerful electricity; and would form a kind of electric atmosphere around the body, that might possibly be one of the best preservatives against the effect of damps.

As for our Swiss lady, I have little doubt that her complaints were owing in great part, perhaps entirely, to her dress; and that a very small alteration, almost in any part of it, would effectually have cured her. A lady who has her head surrounded with wires, and her hair stuck full of metal pins, and who at the same time stands upon dry silk, is to all intents and purposes an electrical conductor insolated, and prepared for collecting the fire from the atmosphere: and it is not at all surprising, that during thunder-storms, or when the air is extremely replete with electrical matter, she should emit sparks, and exhibit other appearances of electricity.—I imagine a very trifling change of dress, which from the constant versatility of their modes may some day take place, would render this lady's disease altogether epidemical amongst the sex.—Only let the soles of their shoes be made of an electric substance, and let the wires of their caps, and pins of their hair, be somewhat lengthened and pointed outwards; and I think there is little doubt, that they will often find themselves in an electrified state:—But, indeed, if they

only wear silk, or even worsted stockings, it may sometimes prove sufficient; for I have often insolated electrometers as perfectly by placing them on a piece of dry silk or flannel, as on a glass.

How little do our ladies imagine, when they surround their heads with wire, the most powerful of all conductors, and at the same time wear stockings, shoes, and gowns of silk, one of the most powerful repellents, that they prepare their bodies in the same manner, and according to the same principles, as electricians prepare their conductors for attracting the fire of lightning! If they cannot be brought to relinquish their wire caps and their pins, might they not fall upon some such preservative as those which of late years have been applied to objects of less consequence.

Suppose that every lady should provide herself with a small chain, or wire, to be hooked on at pleasure during thunder-storms. This should pass from her cap over the thickest part of her hair, which will prevent the fire from being communicated to her head; and so down to the ground.—It is plain this will act in the same manner as the conductors on the top of steeples, which, from the metal spires that are commonly placed there, analogous to the pins and wires, were so liable to accidents. You may laugh at this; but I assure you I never was more serious in my life. A very amiable lady of my acquaintance, Mrs Douglas of Kelso, had almost lost her life by one of those caps mounted on wire. She was standing at an open window during a thunder-storm: the lightning was attracted by the wire, and the cap was burnt to ashes; happily her hair was in its natural state, without powder, pomatum, or pins, and prevented the fire from being conducted to her head; for as she felt no kind of shock, it is proba-

ble that it went off from the wires of the cap to the wall, close to which she then stood. If it had found any conductor to carry it to her head or body, in all probability she must have been killed.—A good strong head of hair, if it is kept perfectly clean and dry, is probably one of the best preservatives against the fire of lightning. But so soon as it is stuffed full of powder and pomatum, and bound together with pins, its repellent force is lost, and it becomes a conductor *.—But I beg pardon for these surmises; I throw them in your way only to improve upon it at leisure; for we have it ever in our power to be making experiments in electricity. And although this fluid is the most subtile and active of any we know, we can command it on all occasions; and I am now so accustomed to its operations, that I seldom comb my hair, or pull off a stocking, without observing them under some form or other. How surprising it is then that mankind should have li-

* Since the writing of these letters, the author has made some experiments on the electricity of hair; which tend still to convince him the more of what he has advanced. A lady told him, that on combing her hair in frosty weather, she had sometimes observed sparks of fire to issue from it. This made him think of attempting to collect the electrical fire from hair alone, without the assistance of any other electrical apparatus. To this end, he desired a young lady to stand on a cake of bees-wax, and to comb her sister's hair, who was sitting on a chair before her.—Soon after she began to comb, the young lady on the wax was greatly astonished to find her whole body electrified; darting out sparks of fire against every object that approached her. The hair was extremely electrical, and affected an electrometer at a very great distance; He charged a metal conductor from it with great ease; and in the space of a few minutes collected as much fire immediately from the hair, as to kindle common spirits; and by means of a small phial, gave many smart shocks to all the company. A full account of these experiments was lately read before the Royal Society. They were made during the time of a very hard frost, and on a strong head of hair, where no powder or pomatum had been used for many months.

ved and breathed for so many thousand years, without almost ever supposing that it existed! But to return to our mountain.

Recupero told me he had observed the same phenomenon here that is common in the eruptions of Mount Vesuvius, viz. red-forked lightning darting from the smoke, without being followed by the noise of thunder. The reason possibly is, that the crater and smoke is at that time so highly electrical, that like a cylinder or globe, heated by friction, it throws off spontaneous flashes into the air, without being brought into the attraction of any conductor, or body less electric than itself, (indeed the spontaneous discharges from a good electrical globe often bear a perfect resemblance to this kind of lightning); however, if a non-electric cloud were to pass near the crater at that time, the crash of thunder would probably be very violent, which indeed is often the case when the air is full of wet clouds in the time of an eruption; but when this does not happen, the equilibrium is probably restored by degrees, and without a shock, from the surplus of electrical matter being gradually communicated to the earth and sea all around the mountain; the immense lavas that have run from it serving as conductors.

So highly electric is the vapour of volcanoes, that it has been observed in some eruptions both of Ætna and Vesuvius, that the whole track of smoke, which sometimes extended above 100 miles, produced the most dreadful effects; killing shepherds and flocks on the mountains, blasting trees, and setting fire to houses, wherever it met with them on an elevated situation. Now probably the flying of a kite, with a wire round its string, would soon have disarmed this formidable cloud. These effects, however, only happen when the

air is dry and little agitated, but when it is full of moist vapour, the great rarefaction from the heat of lava generally brings it down in violent torrents of rain, which soon convey the electrical matter from the clouds to the earth, and restores the equilibrium.

As Recupero, who is a facetious and an agreeable companion, was kind enough to sit a good deal with me during my confinement, I have gathered many remarks from his conversation, that may perhaps be worthy of your attention.

The variety of waters about Ætna, he tells me, is surprising. I have already mentioned the Fiume Freddo, or the river of Acis: Recupero confirms what I have been told of it. There is a lake on the north of the mountain, of about three miles in circumference, which receives several considerable rivers; yet, although there is no apparent outlet, it never overflows its banks. I suggested the probability of a subterraneous communication betwixt this and the Fiume Freddo. He said there was no resemblance in the quality of their waters; however, I think it is probable, that in a course of so many miles, through the caverns of Ætna, full of salts and minerals, it may acquire both its cold and its vitriolic qualities.

There is another lake on the top of a mountain to the west of Ætna, the bottom of which could never be found. It is observed never to rise or fall, but always to preserve the same level. It is undoubtedly the crater of that mountain (which is all of burnt matter) converted into a lake. The river which supplies the baths of Catania is of a very different nature: it never continues the same, but is perpetually changing. Its current is for the most part confined under ground by the lavas; but sometimes it bursts out with such vio-

hence, that the city has suffered greatly from it; and what is still more unfortunate, these eruptions are generally followed by some epidemical distemper. It has now been constantly diminishing for these two years past, and is at present almost reduced to nothing. They are in perpetual dread of its breaking out, and laying waste their fields, as it has so often done before. What is singular, it generally bursts out after a long tract of the driest and warmest weather. The Ætnean Academy have never been able to account for this circumstance. I think it is most probable that it arises from the melting of the snow of Ætna, but I shall not pretend to say how.—These, perhaps, overfilling the caverns that usually receive their water, the surplus is carried off into this river.

The river of Alcantara certainly takes its rise from the melting of these snows. Its waters, I observed, are of the same whitish colours as all the rivers are that run from the Glacieres amongst the Alps. There are several periodical springs on Ætna, that flow only during the day, and stop during the night. These are naturally and easily accounted for from the melting of the snow; for it melts only during the day, being hard frozen every night, even in the hottest season. There are likewise a variety of poisonous springs, some of so deadly a quality, that birds and beasts have been found lying dead on their banks, from having drunk of their water. But (what is perhaps still more singular) Recupero told me, that about twenty years ago, a rent opened in the mountain, that for a considerable time sent forth so mephitic a vapour, that, like the lake Avernus, birds were suffocated in flying over it.

There are many caverns where the air is so extremely cold, that it is impossible to support it for any time.

These the peasants make use of as reservoirs for the snow; and indeed they make the finest ice-houses in the world, preserving it hard frozen during the hottest summers. It would be endless to give an account of all the caverns, and other curious appearances about Ætna. Kircher speaks of a cave which he saw, capable, he says, of containing thirty thousand men. Here, he adds, numbers of people have been lost from their temerity in going too far. One of these caverns still retains the name of Proserpine, from its being supposed by the ancients the passage by which Pluto conveyed her into his dominions; on this occasion Ovid describes Ceres as searching for her daughter, with two trees which she had plucked from the mountain, and lighted by way of torches. These he calls Teda, which is still the name of a tree I have seen no where but on Mount Ætna. It produces a great quantity of rosin, and surely was the most proper tree Ceres could have pitched upon for her purpose. The rosin is called *Catalana*, and is esteemed a cure for sores.

I have mentioned the great variety of flowers, trees, &c. on Mount Ætna. I have found a long list of them in Massa; but as I am not acquainted with their Sicilian names, I can make little out of it. I have engaged a person here to procure me a collection of their seeds in the season. I find of the number, the cinnamon, sarsaparilla, sassafras, rhubarb, and many others that I thought had not been natives of Europe. The Palma Christi too, that plant so much celebrated of late, from the seed of which the castor oil is made, grows both here and in many other places of Sicily, in the greatest abundance. Our botanists have called it Ricinus Americanus, supposing it only to be produced in that part of the world. A Bath physician, I [illegible]

ber, has lately written a treatise on this plant, and the virtues of the oil extracted from its seed, which he makes a sort of Catholicon. You may believe we shall not leave Sicily without providing ourselves with a quantity of this precious seed.

Mount Ætna, I find, is as much celebrated by the ancients as the moderns, for the variety of its odoriferous productions. Plutarch says, their smell was so strong, that on many places of the mountain it was impossible to hunt. I shall transcribe the passage as it is before me in an old translation I have borrowed. "Circum Ætnam in Sicilia neminem ferunt cum canibus venatum iri; quia enim multos perpetuo illic ut in viridario prata, collesque flores mittunt a fragrantia, quæ eam oram occupat, obfuscare ferarum anhelationes," &c. Aristotle has likewise a passage to the very same purpose; but this may suffice.

There were formerly a variety of wild beasts in the woody regions of Ætna; but notwithstanding the advantage they had over the dogs and hunters, the number of these is now greatly reduced.—They have still, however, the wild boar, the roebuck, and a kind of wild goat; but the race of stags, which was much celebrated, as well as that of bears, is thought to be extinct. Several places of the mountain are still named from those animals.

The horses and cattle of Mount Ætna were esteemed the best in Sicily. The cattle are still of a large size, and have horns of such a length, that they are preserved as curiosities in some museums. The horses, I am afraid, have degenerated.

There are said to be quantities of porcupines and land tortoises on some parts of Ætna; but we had not the good fortune to meet with any of them. Neither

did we see any eagles or vultures, which are likewise said to be inhabitants of this mountain.

The accounts given of Mount Ætna by the old Sicilian authors, (several of whom I have borrowed from Recupero), are very various. Some of them describe the hollow of the crater as being seven or eight miles in circumference, some make it five, and others only three: and probably all of them are right; for I find, by all their accounts, that generally once in about one hundred years, the whole crater has fallen down into the bowels of the mountain: that in process of time, a new crater is seen peeping out of the gulf; which perpetually increasing by the matter thrown up, is by degrees raised again to its ancient height, till at last becoming too heavy for its hollow foundations, it again gives way, and at once sinks down into the mountain. This happened about one hundred years ago, in the year 1669, as recorded by Borelli, whose account of it I have before me. "Universam cacumen, quod ad instar speculæ, seu turris, ad ingentem altitudinem elevabatur, quod una cum vasta planitie arenosa depressa, atque absorpta est in profundam voraginem," &c. The same likewise happened in the year 1536, as recorded by Fazzello and Filoteo, and in the year 1444, 1329, and 1157. Of all these I have read an account; but probably betwixt the two last mentioned, there has been another that is not recorded, as the intervals betwixt all the rest are pretty nearly equal.

Some of them give a dreadful account of it. Folcando, one of their historians, tells us, it shook the whole island, and resounded through all its shores. And their poet Erico says, on the same occasion:

> "*S'ode il suo gran mugito*
> *Per mille piagge e lidi.*"

"The bellowing dire a thousand lands resound,
Whose trembling shores return the dreadful sound."

In all probability, this event will very soon happen, as the circumference of the crater is no where recorded to have been reduced to less than three miles; and Recupero says, it is at present only three miles and a half; besides, one hundred years, the common period, has now elapsed since its last fall.

There are many stories of people perishing by their temerity, in being too curious spectators of the eruptions of this mountain; but there are still many more, of those that have been miraculously saved by the interposition of some saint or virgin, who are supposed to be in a perpetual state of warfare with the devils in Mount Ætna. That part of the island where Ætna stands, has ever been named *il Val Demoni*, from the frequent apparitions of these devils. It makes one-third of the island. The other two are named the *Val di Noto*, and the *Val di Mazzaro*.

There is one story, though a very old one, that is still related at Catania; it is taken notice of by Seneca, Aristotle, Strabo, and others. In the time of a great eruption, when the fire was pouring down upon the city, and every one was carrying off his most valuable effects; two rich brothers, named *Anfinomus* and *Anapias*, neglecting all their wealth, escaped from the conflagration with their aged parents on their backs. These authors add, that the fire, respecting such filial piety, spared them, while many others that took the same road were consumed.

This action has been wonderfully extolled, and proves, I think, that feats of this kind were by no means common in those days.—Now, pray, don't you think, in the world, at present, bad as it is supposed to be, there

are few sons who would not have acted in the same manner? And sure I am, the rest of mankind would not have made such a fuss about it. Humanity and natural affection, I believe, in those ages we are inclined to extol so much, were not by many degrees so powerful as they are at present.—Even the pious Æneas himself, one of the most renowned of all their heroes, was in effect but a savage, notwithstanding all that Virgil says to persuade us of the contrary; for you find him sacrificing his weak and captive enemies, at the same time that he is canting and preaching up piety and justice.

These two brothers were so celebrated for this action, that there was a dispute betwixt Syracuse and Catania, which of these cities had given them birth; and temples were erected in both of them, dedicated to Filial Piety, in memory of the event.

In the accounts of the more recent destructions of Catania there occurs no instance of this sort.—We find them only lamenting the loss of priests and nuns, and very much out of humour at their saints for allowing the devils to get the better of them. I have been a good deal entertained with some of those authors.—Selvaggio, one of the poets, speaking of the terrible earthquake in the year 1169, that destroyed Catania, and buried multitudes of people in the ruins, describes it in the following manner, which may serve as a specimen of the poetry of that time:

"Cataneam doleo, dolor est miserabile dictu!
Clara potens antiqua fuit; plebe, milite, clero,
Divitiis, auro, specie, virtute, triumphis.
Heu terræ motu ruit illa potentia rerum:
Morte ruit juvenis, moritur vir, sponsa, maritus,
Unde superbit homo? Deus una diruit hora
Turres, ornatus, vestes, cunctosque paratus.
In tanto gemitu periit pars maxima gentis,

Proh dolor! et monachi quadraginta quatuor et plus:
Et periit pastor patriæ, pater ipse Johannes
Pontificalis honor, lux regni sic periere."

But another, Gustanavilla, one of their historians, gives a very different account of this affair; as it is likewise somewhat curious in its way, I shall copy it for your amusement: "In omnem terram, et in fines orbis, terræ jam exiit plaga illa, qua nuper in Sicilia percussi sunt Catanenses in vigilia B. Agathæ; cum episcopus ille damnatissimus, qui, sicut scitis, sibi sumpsit honorem, non vocatus a Domino, tanquam Aaron, et qui ad sedem illam, non electione canonica, sed Giezitica venalitate intrivat; cum, inquam abominationis offerret incensum, intonuit de cœlo Dominus, et ecce terræ motus factus est magnus; angelus enim Domini percutiens episcopum in furore Domini cum populo, et universa civitate subvertit."

He adds, that if St Agatha's veil had not been produced, the angel of the Lord was in such a fury, that he would not have left one soul alive.

There is a curious painting of the great eruption 1669, in the cathedral of this place. It is but indifferently painted, but gives a dreadful idea of that event. Borelli, who was upon the spot, describes it.—He says, on the 11th of March, some time before the lava burst out, after violent earthquakes and dreadful subterraneous bellowing, a rent was opened in the mountain twelve miles long; in some places of which, when they threw down stones, they could not hear them strike the bottom. He says, that burning rocks, sixty palms in length, were thrown to the distance of a mile; and that the giants, supposed to be buried under Mount Ætna, seemed to have renewed their war against heaven: that stones of a lesser size were carried upwards

of three miles; and that the thunder and lightning from the smoke was scarce less terrible than the noise of the mountain. He adds, that after the most violent struggles and shaking of the whole island, when the lava at last burst through, it sprung up into the air to the height of sixty palms.—In short, he describes that event, as well as the universal terror and consternation it occasioned, in terms full of horror.—For many weeks the sun did not appear, and the day seemed to be changed into night.—Soon after the lava got vent, which was not till four months from the time that the mountain began to labour, all these dreadful symptoms abated, and it was soon perfectly quiet.

He says, this deluge of fire, after destroying the finest country in Sicily, and sweeping away churches, villages, and convents, broke over the lofty walls of Catania, and covered up five of its bastions with the intervening curtains. From thence pouring down on the city, it destroyed every object it met with, overwhelming and burying all in one promiscuous ruin.

What he regrets most was some precious remains of antiquity; the names, the situation, and even the memory of whose existence, is now lost in the place. He mentions an amphitheatre, which he calls *Colliseo*, the *Circus Maximus*, the *Naumachia*, and several temples.

An account of this great eruption was sent to Charles II. by Lord Winchelsea, who was then returning from his embassy at Constantinople, and stopped here on purpose to see so remarkable an event. But his Lordship has not been at that pains to examine it we could have wished. His curiosity was satisfied in one day; and he seems to have been contented only to look at the lava at a great distance; but did not think of examining its source, or ascending the mountain, although

at that time all the most formidable circumstances of the eruption were already over.

I should not finish this account of Mount Ætna, without saying something of the various fables and allegories to which it has given rise; but it would probably lead me into too vast a field, and give this more the air of a dissertation than a letter or a journal. These you will easily recollect. They have afforded ample employment for the muse, in all ages, and in all languages; and indeed the philosopher and natural historian have found, in the real properties of this mountain, as ample a fund of speculation, as the poets have done in the fictitious.—It is so often mentioned by the ancient writers, that it has been said of Ætna as well as of Greece:

"Nullum est sine nomine saxum."

Indeed, I am afraid this saying was much more applicable to it formerly than it is at present; for we even found several large mountains that had no name; and it does not at all appear, that the number of philosophers in Sicily have by any means increased in the latter ages. Their ambition is now changed; and if they can get a saint to keep the devils of Ætna in order, they trouble themselves very little about the cause of its operations; and do not value their island half so much for having given birth to Archimedes or Empedocles, as to St Agatha and St Rosolia.

The ancients as well as the moderns, seem ever to have considered Ætna as one of the highest mountains on the globe. There are many passages in their authors that shew this; though perhaps none more strongly than their making Deucalion and Pyrrha take refuge

on the top of it, to save themselves from the universal deluge *.

I shall now conclude this long account of Mount Ætna, with Virgil's celebrated description of it in the third Æneid, which has been so much admired. You may compare it with the following description of the famous poet Raitano, held, I assure you, in full as high estimation by the Sicilians:

" Nel mezzo verso l'ethere avviccina
Ætna la fronte sua cinta di orrori,
E con ispavantevole rovina.
Rimbomba, e con oribili fragrori.
Soventi negri nubi al ciel destina
Fumanti di atro turbine, e di ardori,
Ergi globbi di fiamma, e su lambisce
Le stelle ornai con infuocate striscie;
Scogli, e divelte viscere di monte
Erruttando tal volta avido estolle;
E con gemiti vomita, e con onte
Liquifatti macigni, e in fondo bolle."

So sings the Sicilian muse: you will not however hesitate to give the preference to the Roman one, although the former is evidently stolen from her.

" ———Horrificis juxta tona Ætna ruinis,
Interdumque atram prorumpit ad æthera nubem,
Turbine fumantem piceo et candente favilla,
Attolitque globos flammarum, et sidera lambit.
Interdumque scopulos, avosaque viscera montis
Erigit eructans, liquefactaque saxa sub auras
Cum gemitu glomerat, fundoque exæstuat imo."

But both these have been greatly outdone by the wonderful imagination of our great countryman Sir Richard Blackmore, who accounts at once for the whole phenomena of Ætna, by the simple idea of giving

* Cataclysmus, quod nos diluvium dicimus, cum factus est, omne genus humanum interriit præter Deucalionem et Pyrrham, qui in montem Ætnam, qui altissimus in Sicilia esse dicitur, fugerunt, &c. HIGINUS.

the mountain a fit of a cholic: a thought that had escaped all the poets and philosophers of antiquity, and seems for ever to have been preserved for the profound genius of this great master and father of the Bathos.—I have forgot the passage, but you will find it, I think, in Prince Arthur.

The philosophical poet, Lucretius, has likewise mentioned the eruptions of Mount Ætna; but Pindar is the oldest poet we know of, that has taken any notice of them. His description is, I think, the most satisfactory of all, and conveys a clearer idea both of the mountain itself, and an eruption of the mountain, than either the Roman or Sicilian poet, though it is not near so much laboured, nor worked up with all that variety of circumstances they have found means to introduce. Its greatest fault is, that Pindar had still kept in view that absurd idea of the ancients, that Jupiter had buried the giants under Mount Ætna; and that their struggling to get loose was the cause of its eruptions; but even this he touches but slightly, as if ashamed to give such a reason. The passage is translated into English by Mr West.

Now under smoking Cuma's sulphurous coast
And vast Sicilia, lies his tortured breast,
By snowy Ætna nurse of endless frost,
The mighty prop of heaven for ever prest;
Forth from whose flaming caverns issuing rise
Tremendous fountains of pure liquid fire,
Which veil in ruddy mists the noon-day skies,
While wrapt in smoke the eddying flames aspire;
Or gleaming through the night with hideous roar,
Far o'er the reddening main huge rocky fragments pour.

This passage decides what has been much disputed, that Ætna was, in these early ages, of as great an elevation as at present. It has been alleged, that volcanoes always increase in height till they are extin-

guished, when they are supposed to moulder down, and by degrees sink into the caverns that are below them, like the astruni, and the solfaterra at Naples; however we find, that Ætna was at that time, as now, covered with eternal snows, and was supposed, like Atlas, to be one of the great props of heaven. But what pleases me the most in this description is, that it proves beyond the possibility of a doubt, that in these very remote eruptions, it was common for the lavas of Ætna to run a great way out to sea.—The conclusion, I think, is fully as just, and perhaps not less sublime, than the "avolsaque viscera montis erigit eructans" of Virgil, which, I must own, I think, rather comes too near Richard's fit of cholic.

Thucydides speaks of three eruptions of this mountain; but is not so particular as we could have wished. He does not mention the date of the first; but says, it was the earliest, after the arrival of the Greeks in Sicily. The second happened about the time of the 78th Olympiad, and the last in that of the 88th, which was nearly about the period when Pindar wrote; so that we cannot doubt that his description is taken from the accounts he had heard of some of those eruptions; the circumstances of which, no doubt, at that time, had afforded matter of conversation all over Greece.

I think we may now try to take leave of Ætna, though I am afraid, during the remainder of our expedition, we shall meet with nothing worthy to succeed it.—We shall sail from hence to-morrow morning; and expect to sleep at Syracuse, as it is only about fifty miles distant. I shall write to you again from the ruins of that celebrated city. Farewell. Ever yours.

LETTER XII.

Syracuse, June 1.

ON the 31st of May, we embarked on board a felucca, and set sail for the mighty Syracuse.—The wind was favourable, and for some time we went at a great rate. The view of Mount Ætna, for the whole of this little voyage, is wonderfully fine; and the bold black coast formed for near thirty miles, of the lava of that immense volcano, gives the most awful idea of its eruptions. There is no part of this coast nearer than thirty miles to its summit; and yet there has hardly been any great eruption, where the lava has not reached the sea, and driven back its waters to a great distance, leaving high rocks and promontories, that for ever set its waves at defiance, and prescribe their utmost limits. What a tremendous scene must the meeting betwixt these adverse elements have formed?

We may easily conceive the variety of changes this coast has undergone in the space of some thousands of years, as every great eruption must have made a considerable difference.—Virgil is wonderfully minute and exact in his geography of Sicily; and this is the only part of the island that seems to be materially altered since his time. He says there was a large port at the foot of Ætna, where ships were secure from every wind;

"Portus ab accessu ventorum immotus et ingens;"

of which, at present, there are not the least remains. It is probably the same that was called by the Sicilians the port of Ulysses; which is often mentioned by their writers.—The place of its existence is still shewn betwixt three and four miles up the country, amongst

the lavas of Ætna. However, I can see no sort of reason why they have called this the port of Ulysses: for surely Homer does not bring his hero near the precincts of Mount Ætna. Indeed, I think it is evident, that this volcano did not burn during the time of Homer, nor for some ages preceding it; otherwise it is not possible, that he would have said so much of Sicily, without taking any notice of so great and capital an object, which, of all others, the daring and sublime imagination of Homer would have been the most eager to grasp at.—It is evident from his account, that Ulysses landed at the west end of Sicily, opposite to the island of Lachaea, now Favignana, almost two hundred miles distant from this port.

Virgil with more judgment lands his hero at the foot of Ætna, which gives him an opportunity of introducing some of the finest descriptions in the Æneid. But it is somewhat odd, that here he makes Æneas find one of Ulysses's companions, who had escaped the rage of Polyphemus, and had lived for several months in the woods and caverns of this mountain.—Virgil must have been aware of this impropriety, as he well knew that Homer had landed Ulysses, and placed the cave of Polyphemus at the most distant point of the island. But he could not prevail on himself to pass Mount Ætna. He was so thoroughly convinced, that this was the most proper landing-place for an epic hero, as well as the most proper habitation for the Cyclops, that, by a bold poetical licence, he has fairly taken it for granted, that Homer really made it so. Indeed, in this passage, the pleasure he affords to the imagination of his reader makes an ample amends for his having imposed on his judgment. But to return to our voyage.

The view of the mountain from the sea is more com-

plete and satisfactory than any where on the island. The eye takes a greater portion of the circle, and you observe, with more distinctness, how it rises equally on all sides, from its immense base, overspread with the beautiful little mountains I have mentioned; and at once can trace the progress of vegetation from its utmost luxuriance, to where it is checked by the two extremes of heat and cold.—The different regions of the mountain are distinctly marked out by their different colours and different productions; exposing at once to the ravished eye every climate, and every season, with all their variety;

"Where blossoms, fruits, and flowers together rise,
"And the whole year in gay confusion lies."

The first region exhibits every object that characterizes summer and autumn; the second those of the most delightful spring; the third, an eternal and unrelenting winter; and the fourth, to complete the contrast, the regions of unextinguishable fire.

The circumference of the great base of Ætna, Recupero told me, he had been at a good deal of pains to ascertain; as it had generally been computed at only a hundred miles, or little more, although the radii of that circle had ever been esteemed at thirty of those miles; an absurdity in computation that had put him upon making this inquiry. The result was, that taking the supposed distance of one place from another, all the way round, the sum of the whole amounted to one hundred and eighty-three miles,—an immense circle surely, and which is still enlarged by every considerable eruption. The whole of this circle is formed of lava and burnt matter; and I have observed, that near the very outermost borders of it, there have been many little eruptions that have pierced through some of the thickest

lavas of Ætna. The small eruptions, at so vast a distance from the great furnace of the mountain, are probably occasioned by the intense heat of the lava, which continues for many years rarefying the air, in the caverns it has run over, which, bursting forth from its prison, the lava sinks down, and kindling the sulphur and nitre with which these caverns are filled, exhibits in miniature the phenomena of a great eruption.

There is a large sandy beach that extends from the mouth of the river Simetus, a great way to the south of Catania, and was probably continued the whole way to the foot of the mountain of Taurominum, (where there are still remains of the east end of it), till it was broken in upon many thousand years ago by the lavas of Ætna; which, from a flat sandy shore, have now converted it into a high, bold, black iron coast. What is a strong proof of this;—in many places where they have sunk deep wells, after piercing through the lava, they have at last come to beds of shells and sea-sand.

There is nothing else very interesting in the voyage from Catania to Syracuse. If you will read the conclusion of the third book of the Æneid, you will find a much better description of it than any I can give you. The coast lies low, and, except Ætna, there are no very striking objects.

We passed the mouths of several rivers: the first and most considerable is the Giaretta, or river of St Paul, formerly the Simetus, and under that name celebrated by the poets. The nymph Thalia, after her amour with Jupiter, is supposed to have been changed into this stream; and to avoid the resentment of Juno, sunk under ground near Mount Ætna, and continued her subterraneous course to the sea. This river was navigable in the time of the Romans, and, Massa says, the only

one of the island that was so.—It takes its rise on the north side of Ætna, and surrounding the west skirts of the mountain falls into the sea near the ruins of the ancient Morgantio. It no longer sinks under ground as it did formerly; but it is now celebrated for a quality it does not appear to have possessed in the times of antiquity, as none of the old writers take notice of it. It throws up near its mouth great quantities of fine amber: this is carefully gathered by the peasants in the neighbourhood, and brought to Catania, where it is manufactured into the form of crosses, beads, saints, &c. and is sold at high prices to the superstitious people on the continent. We bought several of these respectable figures, and found them electrical in a high degree; powerfully attracting feathers, straws, and other light bodies; somewhat emblematical, you will say, of what they represent.—Some pieces of this amber contain flies and other insects curiously preserved in its substance; and we were not a little entertained with the ingenuity of one of the artists, who has left a large blue-bottle fly, with its wings expanded, exactly over the head of a saint, to represent, he told us, *lo spirito santo* descending upon him. I have got some fine pieces of this amber, more electric, I think, and emitting a stronger smell than that which comes from the Baltic. The generation of this substance has long been a controverted point among naturalists; nor do I believe it is as yet ascertained, whether it is a sea or a land production. It is generally supposed to be a kind of gum or bitumen, that issues from the earth in a liquid state, at which time the flies and other insects that light upon it are caught, and by their struggles to get loose, soon work themselves into its substance, which hardening round them, they are for ever preser-

ved in the greatest perfection. Large fine pieces are constantly found at the mouth of the Simetus, supposed to have been brought down by the river; but it is singular, that none of it is ever found any where but on the sea-shore: they have here likewise a kind of artificial amber, made, I am told, from copal; but it is very different from the natural.

Not far from the mouth of this river there are two of the largest lakes in Sicily; the Beviere, and the Pantana; the first of which is supposed to have been made by Hercules; in consequence of which it was held sacred by the ancients. They are full of a variety of fish; one species of which, called Molletti, is much esteemed: the salting and exportation of these makes a considerable branch of their commerce at Leontini, which is in that neighbourhood: that city is one of the most ancient in the island, and is supposed to have been the habitation of the Lestrigons.

The Leontine fields have been much famed for their fertility: Both Diodorus and Pliny assert that they yielded wheat an hundred fold, and that grain grew spontaneously here without culture: But this was only during the reign of Ceres, and is not now the case.

In a few hours sailing we came in sight of the city of Augusta, which is beautifully situated in a small island that was formerly a peninsula: It was therefore called by the Greeks Chersonesus. Both the city and the fortifications seem considerable, and are said to contain about nine thousand inhabitants. The ruins of the Little Hybla, so celebrated for its honey, lie within a few miles of this place.

Some time before our arrival at Syracuse, it fell a dead calm, and we spied a fine turtle fast asleep on the

surface of the water. Our pilot ordered a profound silence, and only two oars to row very gently, that if possible we might surprise him.—Every thing was put in order, and two men were placed ready at the prow to secure the prize.—We were all attention and expectation, and durst hardly breathe for fear of disturbing him.

We moved slowly on, and the turtle lay stone still: the two men bent down their bodies, and had their arms already in the water to seize him.—No alderman, with all deference be it spoken, ever beheld his turtle upon the table with more pleasure and security, nor feasted his imagination more lusciously upon the banquet.—He was already our own in idea, and we were only thinking of the various ways in which he should be dressed:—When—how vain and transitory are all human possessions! the turtle made a plunge, slipped through their fingers, and disappeared in a moment, and with him all our hopes.—We looked very foolish at each other, without uttering a word, till Fullarton asked me, in the most provoking manner, whether I would choose a little of the callipash or the callipee. The two men shrugged up their shoulders, and said *Pazienza;* but Glover told them in a rage, that all the pazienza on earth was not equal to a good turtle.

Soon after this, the remains of the great Syracuse appeared: the remembrance of whose glory, magnificence, and illustrious deeds both in arts and arms, made us for some time even forget our turtle. But, alas! how are the mighty fallen! This proud city, that vied with Rome itself, is now reduced to a heap of rubbish; for what remains of it deserves not the name of a city. We rowed round the greatest part of its walls without seeing a human creature; those very

walls that were the terror of the Roman arms; from whence Archimedes battered their fleets, and with his engines lifted their vessels out of the sea, and dashed them against the rocks. We found the interior part of the city agree but too well with its external appearance. There was not an inn to be found; and after visiting all the monasteries and religious fraternities in search of beds, we found the whole of them so wretchedly mean and dirty, that we preferred at last to sleep on straw; but even that we could not have clean, but were eaten up with vermin of every kind.

We had letters for the Count Gaetano, who made an apology that he could not lodge us, but in other respects shewed us many civilities; particularly in giving us the use of his carriage, in explaining the ruins, in pointing out every thing that was worthy of our attention; and likewise in giving us letters of recommendation for Malta. He is a gentleman of good sense, and has written several treatises on the antiquities of Sicily.

Of the four cities that composed the ancient Syracuse, there remains only Ortigia, by much the smallest, situated in the island of that name. It is about two miles round, and is supposed to contain about fourteen thousand inhabitants. The ruins of the other three, Tycha, Achradina, and Neapoli, are computed at twenty-two miles in circumference, but almost the whole of this space is now converted into rich vineyards, orchards, and corn-fields; the walls of these are indeed every where built with broken marbles full of engravings and inscriptions, but most of them defaced and spoiled. The principal remains of antiquity are a theatre and amphitheatre; many sepulchres, the Latomie, the Catacombs, and the ear of Dionysius, which it was impossible to destroy.—The Latomie now makes

a noble subterraneous garden, and is indeed one of the most beautiful and romantic spots I ever beheld. Most of it is about one hundred feet below the level of the earth, and of an incredible extent. The whole is hewn out of a rock as hard as marble, composed of a concretion of shells, gravel, and other marine bodies. The bottom of this immense quarry, from whence probably the greatest part of Syracuse was built, is now covered with an exceeding rich soil; and as no wind from any point of the compass can touch it, it is filled with a great variety of the finest shrubs and fruit-trees, which bear with vast luxuriance, and are never blasted. The oranges, citrons, bergamots, pomegranates, figs, &c. are all of a remarkable size and fine quality. Some of these trees, but more particularly the olives, grow out of the hard rock: where there is no visible soil: and exhibit a very uncommon and pleasing appearance.

There is a variety of wild and romantic scenes in this curious garden; in the midst of which we were surprised by the appearance of a figure under one of the caverns, that added greatly to the dignity and solemnity of the place.—It was that of an aged man, with a long flowing white beard that reached down to his middle. His old wrinkled face and scanty grey locks pronounced him a member of some former age as well as of this. His hands, which were shook by the palsy, held a sort of pilgrim's staff; and about his neck there was a string of large beads with a crucifix hanging to its end.—Had it not been for these marks of his later existence, I don't know but I should have asked him, whether, in his youth, he had not been acquainted with Theocritus and Archimedes, and if he did not remember the reign of Dionysius the tyrant. But he saved us the trouble, by telling us he was the hermit of the

place, and belonged to a convent of Capuchins on the rock above; that he had now bid adieu to the upper world, and was determined to spend the rest of his life in this solitude, in prayer for the wretched mortals that inhabit it.

This figure, together with the scene in which it appears, are indeed admirably well adapted, and reflect a mutual dignity upon each other. We left some money upon the rock:—For the Capuchins, who are the greatest beggars on earth, never touch money, but save their too tender consciences, and preserve their vows unbroken, by the simple device of lifting it with a pair of pincers, and carrying it to the market in their sack or cowl. This I have seen more than once.—We were much delighted with the Latomie, and left it with regret: It is the very same that has been so much celebrated by Cicero about eighteen hundred years ago: "Opus est ingens (he says) magnificum regum, ac tyrannorum. Totum ex saxo in mirandam altitudinem depresso," &c. A little to the west of it is supposed to have stood the country-house, the sale of which you still remember he gives so lively and pleasant an account of; by which a goldsmith (I have forgot his name) cheated a Roman nobleman in a very ingenious manner.

The ear of Dionysius is no less a monument of the ingenuity and magnificence, than of the cruelty of that tyrant. It is a huge cavern cut out of the hard rock, in the form of the human ear. The perpendicular height of it is about eighty feet, and the length of this enormous ear is not less than two hundred and fifty. The cavern was said to be contrived so, that every sound made in it, was collected and united into one point, as into a focus; this was called the Tympanum; and exactly opposite to it the tyrant has made a small

hole, which communicated with a little apartment where he used to conceal himself. He applied his own ear to this hole, and is said to have heard distinctly every word that was spoken in the cavern below. This apartment was no sooner finished, and a proof of it made, than he put to death all the workmen that had been employed in it. He then confined all that he suspected were his enemies; and, by overhearing their conversation, judged of their guilt, and condemned and acquitted accordingly.

As this chamber of Dionysius is very high in the rock, and now totally inaccessible, we had it not in our power to make proof of this curious experiment, which our guides told us had been done some years ago by the captain of an English ship.

The echo in the ear is prodigious; much superior to any other cavern I have seen. The holes in the rock, to which the prisoners were chained, still remain, and even the lead and iron in several of them. We surprised a poor young porcupine who had come here to drink, of whom our guides made a lawful prize.—Near to this are caverns of a great extent, where they carry on a manufactory of nitre, which is found in vast abundance on the sides of these caves.

The amphitheatre is in the form of a very eccentric ellipse, and is much ruined; but the theatre is so entire, that most of the gradini or seats still remain. Both these are in that part of the city that was called Neapoli, or the New City. "Quarta autem est urbs (says Cicero) quæ quia postrema ædificata est, Neapolis nominatur, quam ad summam theatrum est maximum," &c. However, it is but a small theatre in comparison of that of Taurominum. We searched amongst the sepulchres, several of which are very elegant, for

that of Archimedes; but could see nothing resembling it.—At his own desire it was adorned with the figure of a sphere inscribed in a cylinder, but had been lost by his ungrateful countrymen, even before the time that Cicero was questor of Sicily. It is pleasant to observe with what eagerness this great man undertakes the search of it, and with what exultation he describes his triumph on the discovery. "Ego autem cum omnia collustrarem oculis (est enim ad portas Agragianas magna frequentia sepulchrorum) animadverti columnellam non multum e dumis eminentem, in qua inerat sphæræ figura et cylindri. Atque ego statim Syracusanis (erant autem principes mecum) dixi, me illud ipsum arbitrari esse quod quærerem. Immissi cum falcibus multi purgarunt, et aperuerunt locum: quo cum patefactus esset additus ad adversam basim accessimus; apparebat epigramma exesis posterioribus partibus versiculorum dimidiatis fere: Ita nobilissima Græciæ civitas, quondam vero etiam doctissima sui civis unius acutissimi monumentum ignorasset, nisi ab homine Arpinate didicisset," &c.

The Catacombs are a great work; little inferior either to those of Rome or Naples, and in the same style. There are many remains of temples. The Duke of Mont-albano, who has written on the antiquities of Syracuse, reckons near twenty; but there is hardly any of these that are now distinguishable. A few fine columns of that of Jupiter Olympius still remain; and the temple of Minerva (now converted into the cathedral of the city, and dedicated to the Virgin) is almost entire. They have lately built a new facade to it; but I am afraid they have not improved on the simplicity of the antique. It is full of broken pediments, and I think in a bad style.

Ortigia, the only remaining part of Syracuse, was anciently an island; it is often denominated such by Virgil, Cicero, and many of the Greek and Latin historians. In later ages, and probably by the ruins of this mighty city, the strait that separated it from the continent was filled up; and it had now been a peninsula for many ages; till the present king of Spain, at a vast expence, cut through the neck of land that joined it to Sicily, and has again reduced it to its primitive state.

Here he has raised a noble fortification, which appears to be almost impregnable. There are four strong gates, one within the other, with each a glacis, covered way, scarp and counterscarp, and a broad deep ditch filled with sea-water, and defended by an immense number of—embrasures;—but not so much as one single piece of artillery. This you will, no doubt, think ridiculous enough, but the ridicule is still heightened, when I assure you there is not a cannon of any kind belonging to this noble fortress, but one small battery of six-pounders for saluting ships that go in and out of the port. If you are at a loss to account for this, you will please remember that it is a work of the king of Spain. However, the ditches are very useful; they are perpetually covered with fishing-boats; and they can use their nets and lines here with the greatest success, even in the most stormy weather; though I dare say this was none of the motives that induced his majesty to make them. The nobility of the place have likewise barges here for their amusement.

As the celebrated fountain of Arethusa has ever been looked upon as one of the greatest curiosities of Syracuse, you may believe we were not a little impatient to examine it: And indeed only by observing Cicero's

account of it *, we soon found it out.—It still exactly answers the description he gives, except with regard to the great quantities of fish it contained, which seem now to have abandoned it.

The fountain of Arethusa was dedicated to Diana, who had a magnificent temple near it, where great festivals were annually celebrated in honour of the goddess. We found a number of nymphs, up to the knees in the fountain, busy washing their garments, and we dreaded the fate of Acteon and Alpheus; but if these were of Diana's train, they are by no means so coy as they were of old; and a man would hardly choose to run the risk of being changed either into a stag or a river for the best of them.

It is indeed an astonishing fountain; and rises at once out of the earth, to the size of a river.—The poetical fictions concerning it are too well known to require that I should enumerate them. Many of the people here believe to this day, that it is the identical river Arethusa, that sinks under ground near Olympia in Greece, and continuing its course for five or six hundred miles below the ocean, rises again in this spot.

It is truly astonishing that such a story as this should have gained such credit among the ancients, for it is not only their poets, but natural historians and philosophers too, that take notice of it. Pliny mentions it more than once; and there are few or none of the Latin poets that it has escaped.

This strange belief has been communicated to the Sicilian authors, and, what is amazing, there is hardly

* In hac insula extrema est fons aquæ dulcis, cui nomen Arethusa est, incredibili magnitudine plenissimus piscium, qui fluctu totus operiretur, nisi munitione, ac mole lapidum a mari disjunctus esset, &c. Cic.

ny of them that doubts of it —Pomponius Mela, Pausanius, Massa, and Fazzello, are all of the same sentiments; to support which they tell you the old story of the golden cup won at the Olympic games, which was thrown into the Grecian Arethusa, and was soon after cast up again by the Sicilian one.

They likewise add, that it had always been observed that after the great sacrifices at Olympia, the blood of which fell into that river, the waters of Arethusa rose for several days tinged with blood.

This, like many modern miracles, was probably a trick of the priests.—Those of Diana had the charge of the fountain of Arethusa, and no doubt were much interested to support the credit of the story; for it was that goddess that converted the nymph Arethusa into a river, and conducted her by subterraneous passages from Greece to Sicily, to avoid the pursuit of Alpheus, who underwent the same fate.

At a little distance from the fountain of Arethusa, there is a very large spring of fresh water, that boils up in the sea. It is called *Occhi di Zilica*, and by some Alpheus, who is supposed by the poets to have pursued Arethusa below the sea all the way to Sicily.

As this spring is not taken notice of by any of the great number of the ancients that speak of Arethusa, it is most probable that it did not then exist; and is a part of that fountain that has since burst out before its arrival at the island of Ortigia. Had it been visible in the time of the Greeks, there is no doubt that they would have made use of this as a strong argument to prove the submarine journey of Arethusa; as it in fact rises at some distance in the sea, and pretty much in the same direction that Greece lies from Ortigia. It sometimes boils up so strong, that after piercing the salt wa-

ter, I am told it can be taken up very little affected by it.

Syracuse has two harbours; the largest of which, on the south-west side of Ortigia, is reckoned six miles round, and was esteemed one of the best in the Mediterranean. It is said by Diodorus to have run almost into the heart of the city, and was called Marmoreo, because entirely surrounded with buildings of marble; the entry into this harbour was strongly fortified, and the Roman fleets could never penetrate it.

The small port is on the north-east of Ortigia, and is likewise recorded to have been highly ornamented. Fazzello says, there is still the remains of a submarine aqueduct, that runs through the middle of it, which was intended to convey the water from the fountain of Arethusa to the other parts of the city.

Near this port, they show the spot where Archimedes' house stood; and likewise the tower from whence he is said to have set fire to the Roman galleys with his burning glasses; a story which is related by several authors, but which is now almost universally exploded, from the difficulty to conceive a burning glass, or a concave speculum, with a focus of such an immense length as this must have required.

However, I should be apt to imagine if this be not entirely a fiction, (of which there is some probability), that it was neither performed by refracting burning-glasses, nor speculums, but only by means of common looking-glasses, or very clear plates of metal. Indeed, from the situation of the place it must have been done by reflection; for Archimedes' tower stood on the north of the little port where the Roman fleet are said to have been moored; so that their vessels lay in a right line betwixt him and the sun at noon; and at a very

small distance from the wall of the city where this tower stood. But if you will suppose this to have been performed by common burning glasses, or by those of the parabolical kind, it will be necessary to raise a tower of a most enormous height on the island of Ortigia, in order to interpose these glasses betwixt the sun and the Roman galleys; and even this could not have been done till late in the afternoon, when his rays are exceedingly weak. But I have very little doubt that common looking-glasses would be found all-sufficient to perform these effects.

Let us suppose that a thousand of these were made to reflect the rays to the same point: the heat, in all probability, must be increased to a greater degree than in the focus of most burning-glasses; and abundantly capable of setting fire to every combustible substance. —This experiment might be easily made by means of a battalion of men, arming each with a looking-glass instead of a firelock; and setting up a board at two or three hundred yards distance for them to fire at. I suppose it would take a considerable time before they were expert at this exercise; but by practice, I have no doubt that they might all be brought to hit the mark instantaneously at the word of command; like the lark-catchers in some countries, who are so dexterous at this manœuvre, that with a small mirror they throw the rays of light on the lark, let her be never so high in the air; which, by a kind of fascination, brings down the poor animal to the snare.

You may laugh at all this; but I don't think it is impossible that a looking-glass may one day be thought as necessary an implement for a soldier as at present it is for a beau. I am very apprehensive the French will get the start of us in this signal invention; as I have

been assured long ago, that few of their men ever go to the field, without first providing themselves with one of these little warlike engines, the true use of which, happily for us, they are as yet unacquainted with. You will easily perceive, that if this experiment succeeds, it must alter the whole system of fortification as well as of attack and defence; for every part of the city that is exposed to the view of the besiegers, may be easily set in a flame; and the besieged would have the same advantage over the camp of the besieging army*.

We are already completely tired of Syracuse, which, of all the wretched places we have yet met with, is by many degrees the most wretched: For besides that its inhabitants are so extremely poor and beggarly, many of them are so overrun with the itch, that we are under perpetual apprehensions, and begin to be extremely well satisfied that we could not procure beds. It is truly melancholy to think of the dismal contrast that its former magnificence makes with its present meanness. The mighty Syracuse, the most opulent and powerful of all the Grecian cities, which, by its own proper strength alone, was able, at different times, to contend against all the power of Carthage and Rome:—Which is recorded (what the force of united nations is now incapable of) to have repulsed fleets of two thousand sail, and armies of two hundred thousand men; and contained within its own walls, what no city ever did before or since, fleets and armies that were the terror

* Since the writing of these letters, the author has been informed that Mr Buffon actually made this experiment.—He constructed a kind of frame, in which were fixed four hundred small mirrors, disposed in such a manner, that the rays reflected from each of them fell exactly on the same point. By means of this he melted lead at the distance of one hundred and twenty feet, and set fire to a hay stack at a much greater distance.

of the world: This haughty and magnificent city, reduced even below the consequence of the most insignificant burgh:—"Sic transit gloria mundi."—I have not been able to procure a table to write upon, but by way of succedaneum am obliged to lay a form over the back of two chairs.—We have got into the most wretched hovel you can conceive, and the most dirty; but what is still worst of all, we can find nothing to eat; and if we had not brought some cold fowls along with us, we might have starved.

The heat has been considerably greater here than at Catania. The thermometer is just now at 78.—There is an old remark made on the climate of this place by some of the ancients; which is still said to hold good: That at no season the sun has ever been invisible during a whole day at Syracuse. I find it mentioned by several Sicilian authors, but shall not vouch for the truth of it.—Adieu.—My next will probably be from Malta; for we shall sail to-morrow, if it be possible to procure a vessel. Ever yours.

LETTER XIII.

Capo Passero, June 3.

AS we found the mighty city of Syracuse so reduced, that it could not afford beds and lodging to three weary travellers, we agreed to abridge our stay in it; and accordingly hired a Maltese Sparonaro to carry us to that island: This is a small six-oared boat, made entirely for speed, to avoid the African pirates, and other Barbaresque vessels, with which these seas are infested; but so flat and so narrow, that they are

not able to bear any sea, and of consequence keep always as near the coast as possible.

On the 2d of June, by day-break, we left the Marmoreo or great port of Syracuse; and although the wind was exactly contrary, and pretty strong, by the force of their oars, which they manage with great dexterity, we got on at the rate of four miles an hour. They do not pull their oars as we do, but push them like the Venetian Gondoliers; always fronting the bow of the boat, and seldom or never sit down when they row; allowing the whole weight of their bodies to be exerted every stroke of the oar. This gives a prodigious momentum, and is certainly much more forcible than a simple exertion of the muscles of the arm.

About ten o'clock the wind became favourable, when we went indeed at an immense rate. At twelve it blew a hurricane, and with some difficulty we got under shore, but the wind was so exceedingly violent, that even there we had like to have been overset, and we were obliged to run aground to save us from that disaster. Here we were a good deal annoyed by the sand carried about by the wind; however, the hurricane was soon over, and we again put to sea with a favourable gale, which in a few hours carried us to Capo Passero.

In this little storm we were a good deal amused with the behaviour of our Sicilian servant, who at land is a fellow of undaunted courage, of which we have had many proofs; but here (I don't know why) it entirely forsook him, although there was in fact no real danger, for we never were more than 100 yards from the shore. He gave himself up to despair, and called upon all his saints for protection: and never again recovered his confidence all the rest of this little voyage; perpetually wishing himself back at Naples, and swear-

ing that no earthly temptation should ever induce him to go to sea again. The same fellow but a few days ago, mounted a most vicious horse, and without the least fear or concern galloped along the side of a precipice, where every moment we expected to see him dashed to pieces; so singular and various are the different modes of fear and of courage.

Capo Passero, anciently called Pachinus, is the remotest and most southerly point of Sicily. It is not a peninsula, as represented in all the maps, but a wretched barren island, of about a mile round; with a fort and a small garrison to protect the neighbouring country from the incursions of the Barbary corsairs, who are often very troublesome on this part of the coast. This little island and fort lie about a mile and a half distant from the small creek of which we have taken possession, and are separated from the rest of Sicily by a strait of about half a mile broad.

Our pilot told us that we must not think of Malta, which is almost an hundred miles off, till there were more settled appearances of good weather.

As there is no habitation here of any kind, we searched about, till at last we found a small cavern, where we made a very comfortable dinner. We then sallied forth to examine the face of the country, as well as to try if we could shoot something for our supper.—We found that we had now got into a very different world from any thing we had yet seen. The country here is exceedingly barren, and to a considerable distance produces neither corn nor wine: but the fields are adorned with an infinite variety of flowers and of flowering shrubs, and the rocks are every where entirely covered with capers, which are just now fit for ga-

thering. If we had vinegar, we could soon have pickled hogsheads of them.

We found here in the greatest perfection, that beautiful shrub called the Palmeta, resembling a small palm-tree, with an elegant fine flower: but, to our great mortification, the seed is not yet ripe. We likewise found great quantities of a blue everlasting flower, which I don't remember to have seen in Miller, or any of our botanical books. The stem rises above a foot high, and is crowned with a large cluster of small blue flowers, the leaves of which are of a dry substance like the Elychrysum, or globe Amaranthus. Some of these are of a purple colour, but most of them blue. I have gathered a pretty large quantity for the speculation of the botanists on our return.

We found a good swimming place, which is always one of the first things we look out for, as this exercise constitutes one of the principal pleasures of our expedition.

As soon as it was dark, we got on board our little boat, and rowed about an hundred yards out to sea, where we cast anchor; our pilot assuring us that this was absolutely necessary, as the people in this part of the country are little better than savages; and, were we to stay at land, might very possibly come down during the night, and rob and murder us.

He likewise told us, that the Turks had made frequent invasions upon this point of the island, which, of all others, lay most exposed to their depredations; that lately three of their chebecks ran into a small harbour a few miles from this, and carried off six merchant-ships; and that very often some of their light vessels were seen hovering off the coast; and the only way to be in perfect security from those two enemies

by sea and land, was to choose a place on the coast so deep, that the banditti by land could not wade into us; and at the same time so shallow, as to be equally inaccessible to the banditti by sea.

When we found ourselves thus in security on both hands, we wrapt ourselves up in our cloaks, and fell asleep: however, we had but a very uncomfortable night; the wind rose, and the motion of our little bark was exceedingly disagreeable, and made us heartily sick. As soon as day began to appear, we made them pull into shore; when we were immediately cured of our sickness; and as the weather continued still unfavourable, we have fallen upon a variety of amusements to pass the time.

We have been thrice in the water, which is warm and pleasant; and in the intervals, I have writ you this letter on the top of a large basket, in which we carry our sea-store. We have likewise gathered shells, pieces of coral, of spunge, and several beautiful kinds of sea-weed. The rocks here are all of sand and gravel run together, and become as hard as granite. There are many shells and other marine substances mixed in their composition which renders them objects of curiosity in the eye of a naturalist.

This morning we made a kind of tent of a sail, drawn over the point of a rock, and fixed with an oar, by way of pole. Here we breakfasted most luxuriously on excellent tea and honey of Hybla.

I was interrupted in this part of my letter, by an officer from the fort of Capo Passero. He tells us, that we may give over all thoughts of getting farther for these six days.—What do you think is his reason? —I own I was in some pain till he mentioned it.— This wind set in exactly as the moon entered her se-

cond quarter, and it will certainly continue till she is full. There is a rascal for you!—If he be telling truth I shall certainly study astrology. He likewise told us, that two galliots had been seen off the coast; and desired us to be upon our guard; but I own, the moon, together with other circumstances, has considerably weakened his evidence with me.

We have learned from his conversation, that the fort of Capo Passero is made use of as a place of exile for the delinquents in the army; of which number I have not the least doubt that he is one. He told us there were two near relations of the Viceroy that had lately been sent there for misdemeanours; that for his part, he belonged to a very agreeable garrison; but as he loved retirement, he chose to accompany them. However, his countenance told a very different story; and said, in strong language, that he was a *tres mauvais sujet*. Besides, he is a stupid fellow, and has tired me. I could learn nothing from him.

It must be owned, this is an excellent place of exile for a young rake, who wants to show away in the beau monde. It is not within many miles of any town or village; so that the gentleman may enjoy retirement in its utmost perfection.

We were surprised to find on this coast quantities of the true pumice-stone, which at first we supposed to have been brought by the sea from Ætna, till we likewise discovered many large pieces of lava, which made us imagine there must have been some eruption of fire in this part of the island; yet I see no conical mountain, or any other indication of it.

If our officer's prognostications prove true, and we are detained here any longer, I shall examine the country to a much greater distance. The wind continues

directly contrary; the sea is very high in the canal of Malta, and our Sicilian servant is in a sad trepidation.—But I see Glover and Fullarton coming for their dinner; so I shall be obliged to give up the basket.—This sea air gives one a monstrous appetite; and it is with grief that I mention it, we are already brought to short allowance;—only one cold fowl amongst three of us; all three pretty sharp set, I assure you.—Those infamous rascals to lose our turtle!—They have spied a fishing boat, and are hailing her as loud as they can roar—but alas! she is too far off to hear them.—They have just fired a gun to bring her to, and happily she obeys the signal, so there is still hopes; otherwise we shall soon be reduced to bread and water. Our tea and sugar, too, are just upon a close, which is the cruelest article of all; but we have plenty of good bread and Hybla honey; so we are in no danger of starving.

We have likewise made an admirable and a very comfortable disposition for our night's lodging. The Sparonaro is so very narrow, that it is impossible for us to lie all in it: besides, we are eat up with vermin, and have nothing but the hard boards to lie on: all these considerations, added to the cursed swinging of the boat, and the horrid sickness it occasions, have determined us rather to trust ourselves to the mercy of the banditti than to lie another night at sea; besides, we have made the happiest discovery in the world; a great quantity of fine, soft, dry sea-weed, lying under the shelter of a rock, and seems intended by providence for our bed: over this we are going to stretch a sail, and expect to sleep most luxuriously; but to prevent all danger from a surprise, we have agreed to stand centry by turns, with Fullarton's double-barrelled gun,

well primed and loaded for the reception of the enemy; at the first discharge of which, and not before, the whole guard is to turn out, with all the remaining part of our artillery and small arms; and as our situation is a very advantageous one, I think we shall be able to make a stout defence.

As we are six in number, three masters and three servants, the duty, you see, will be but trifling; and five of us will always sleep in security. Our guard, to be sure, might have been stronger; but our Sparonaro men have absolutely refused to be of the party: having much more confidence in their own element; however, they have promised, in case of an attack, immediately to come to our assistance. I think the disposition is far from being a bad one, and we are not a little vain of our generalship.

The fishing-boat is now arrived, and they have bought some excellent little fishes, which are already on the fire. Adieu. These fellows are roaring for their cold fowl, and I can command the basket no longer. Ever yours.

LETTER XIV.

Malta, June 4.

IN spite of appearances, and our officer's wise prognostications, the wind changed in the afternoon, and we got under sail by six o'clock; we passed the Straits, and coasted along till eight, when we landed to cook some macaroni we had purchased of our sailors, and try if we could shoot something for sea-store, as we have still a long voyage before us.

We came to the side of a sulphureous lake, the smell of which was so strong, that we perceived it upwards of a mile distant. We found the water boiling up with violence in many places, though the heat at the banks of the lake is very inconsiderable. However, this, added to the pumice and lava we found near Capo Passero, tends greatly to confirm us in the opinion, that this part of the island, as well as about Ætna, has, in former ages, been subject to eruptions of fire.

I think it is more than probable, that this is the celebrated Camerina, which Æneas saw immediately after his passing Pachynus, (or Capo Passero), which, Virgil says the Fates had decreed should never be drained:

" Hinc altas cautes projectaque saxa Pachyni
" Radimus; et fatis nunquam concessa moveri
" Adparet Camarina procul."

Virgil had good reason to say so; for the level of the lake or marsh (it being somewhat betwixt the two) is at least as low as that of the sea, and consequently never could be drained.

It is surrounded with a variety of fine evergreens and flowering shrubs, of which the palmeta, and the arbutus or strawberry tree, are the most beautiful. We saw a great many wild-fowl; but what surprised me, in so unfrequented a place, they were so shy, that there was no getting near them: there was one kind, in particular, that attracted our attention; it was of the size and form of a grey plover, and flew in the same manner; but had a tail of a great length, which seemed to be composed only of two small flexible feathers, that made a very uncommon appearance in the air. After using all our art to shoot one of them, we were obliged to give up the attempt.

Here we killed a small black snake, which, I think, answers the description I have seen of the asp. We dissected out its tongue, the end of which appears sharp like a sting, and I suppose is one, as it darted out with violence against our sticks, when we presented them to it. Now as all animals, when attacked, make use of those weapons that Nature has armed them with for their defence, it appeared evident to us, (supposing this rule a just one), that this animal was conscious of a power of hurting in its tongue; and we have been more fully convinced of it from dissection. The sting appears considerably larger than that of a bee. We found a little bag at the other end of the tongue, and probably, if we had had a microscope, should have found the tongue perforated. This snake has no teeth; but very hard gums. I have taken care to preserve the tongue for your inspection.

As I think it has always been supposed, that serpents hurt only with their teeth, I thought this might be worthy of your notice. It is true, that the darting out of the tongue is a trick of the whole serpent tribe; but this animal seemed to do it with peculiar ferocity, and to strike it with violence against our sticks. It was this that put us upon the examination.

I don't recollect that this singularity is mentioned in any book of natural history, but possibly I may be mistaken; nor indeed do I remember either to have seen or heard of any animal armed in this manner:—Unless you will suppose me to adopt the sentiments of poor Mr ——, who, ever since his marriage, alleges, that the tongues of many females are formed after this singular manner; and remarks one peculiarity, that the sting seldom or never appears till after matrimony. He is very learned on this subject, and thinks it may possi-

bly have proceeded from their original connection with the serpent. Let this be as it may, I sincerely hope that you and I shall never have such good reason for adopting that opinion.

A little after nine we embarked. The night was delightful; but the wind had died away about sun-set, and we were obliged to ply our oars to get into the canal of Malta. The coast of Sicily began to recede; and in a short time we found ourselves in the ocean. There was a profound silence, except the noise of the waves breaking on the distant shore, which only served to render it more solemn. It was a dead calm, and the moon shone bright on the waters. The waves from the late storm were still high, but smooth and even, and followed one another with a slow and equal pace. The scene had naturally sunk us into meditation; we had remained near an hour without speaking a word, when our sailors began their midnight hymn to the Virgin. The music was simple, solemn, and melancholy, and in perfect harmony with the scene, and with all our feelings. They beat exact time with their oars, and observed the harmony and the cadence with the utmost precision. We listened with infinite pleasure to this melancholy concert, and felt the vanity of operas and oratorios. There is often a solemnity and a pathetic in the modulation of these simple productions, that causes a much stronger effect, than the composition of the greatest masters, assisted by all the boasted rules of counter-point.

At last they sung us asleep, and we awoke forty miles distant from Sicily. We were now on the main ocean, and saw no land but Mount Ætna; which is the perpetual polar star of these seas. We had a fine breeze, and about two o'clock we discovered the island of Malta; and in less than three hours more, we reach-

ed the city of Valetta. The approach of the island is very fine, although the shore is rather low and rocky. It is every where made inaccessible to an enemy, by an infinite number of fortifications. The rock, in many places, has been sloped into the form of a glacis, with strong parapets and intrenchments running behind it.

The entry into the port is very narrow, and is commanded by a strong castle on either side. We were hailed from each of these, and obliged to give a strict account of ourselves; and, on our arrival at the side of the key, we were visited by an officer of the health-office, and obliged to give oath with regard to the circumstances of our voyage.—He behaved in the civilest manner, and immediately sent us Mr Rutter, the English consul, for whom we had letters of recommendation.

On getting on shore, we found ourselves in a new world.—The streets crowded with well dressed people, who have all the appearance of health and affluence; whereas at Syracuse, there was scarce a creature to be seen; and even those few had the appearance of disease and wretchedness.—Mr Rutter immediately conducted us to an inn, which had more the appearance of a palace. We have had an excellent supper, and good Burgundy; and as this is the king's birth-day, we have almost got tipsy to his health. We are now going into clean, comfortable beds, in expectation of the sweetest slumbers.—Think of the luxury of this, after being five long days without throwing off our clothes.—Good-night, I would not lose a moment of it for the world. —People may say what they please, but there is no enjoyment in living in perpetual ease and affluence, and the true luxury is only to be attained by undergoing a few hardships.—But this is no time to philosophise. So adieu.

LETTER XV.

Malta, June 5.

OUR banker, M. Pousilach, was here before we were up, inviting us to dine with him at his country-house, from whence we are just now returned. He gave us a noble entertainment, served on plate, with an elegant desert, and a great variety of wines.

After dinner we went to visit the principal villas of the island; particularly those of the grand master, and the general of the galleys, which lie contiguous to each other. These are nothing great or magnificent; but they are admirably contrived for a hot climate, where, of all things, shade is the most desirable. The orange groves are indeed very fine, and the fruit they bear are superior to any thing you have seen in Spain or Portugal.

The aspect of the country is far from being pleasing: the whole island is a great rock of very white free-stone, and the soil that covers this rock, in most places, is not more than five or six inches deep; yet, what is singular, we found their crop in general was exceedingly abundant. They account for it from the copious dews that fall during the spring and summer months; and pretend likewise, that there is a moisture in the rock below the soil, that is of great advantage to the corn and cotton, keeping its roots perpetually moist and cool: without which singular quality, they say, they could have no crops at all, the heat of the sun is so exceedingly violent.

Their barley harvest has been over some time ago; and they are just now finishing that of the wheat. The whole island produces corn only sufficient to sup-

port its inhabitants for five months, or little more; but the crop they most depend upon is the cotton. They began sowing it about three weeks ago, and it will be finished in a week more. The time of reaping it is in the month of October, and beginning of November.

They pretend that the cotton produced from this plant, which is sown and reaped in four months, is of a much superior quality to that of the cotton-tree. I compared them, but I cannot say I found it so; this is indeed the finest; but that of the cotton-tree is by much the strongest texture. The plant rises to the height of a foot and a half, and is covered with a number of nuts or pods full of cotton: these, when ripe, they are at great pains to cut off every morning before sun-rise; for the heat of the sun immediately turns the cotton yellow; which, indeed, we saw from those pods they save for seed.

They manufacture their cotton into a great variety of stuffs. Their stockings are exceedingly fine. Some of them, they assured us, had been sold for ten sequins a pair. Their coverlids and blankets are esteemed all over Europe. Of these the principal manufactures are established in the little island of Gozzo, where the people are said to be more industrious than those of Malta, as they are more excluded from the world, and have fewer inducements to idleness. Here the sugar-cane is still cultivated with success, though not in any considerable quantity.

The Maltese oranges certainly deserve the character they have of being the finest in the world. The season continues for upwards of seven months, from November till the middle of June; during which time, those beautiful trees are always covered with abundance of this delicious fruit. Many of them are of the red

kind, much superior, in my opinion, to the others, which are rather too luscious. They are produced, I am told, from the common orange bud, engrafted on the pomegranate stock. The juice of this fruit is red as blood, and of a fine flavour. The greatest part of their crop is sent in presents to the different courts of Europe, and to the relations of the chevaliers. It was not without a good deal of difficulty that we procured a few chests for our friends at Naples.

The industry of the Maltese in cultivating their little island is inconceivable. There is not an inch of ground lost in any part of it; and where there was not soil enough, they have brought over ships and boats loaded with it from Sicily, where there is plenty and to spare. The whole island is full of inclosures of freestone, which gives the country a very uncouth and a very barren aspect, and, in summer, reflects such a light and heat, that it is exceedingly disagreeable and offensive to the eyes. The inclosures are very small and irregular, according to the inclination of the ground. This, they say, they are obliged to observe, notwithstanding the deformity it occasions; otherwise the floods, to which they are subject, would soon carry off their soil.

The island is covered over with country houses and villages, besides seven cities, for so they term them; but there are only two, the Valetta and the Citta Vecchia, that by any means deserve that appellation. Every little village has a noble church, elegantly finished and adorned with statues of marble, rich tapestry, and a large quantity of silver plate. They are by much the handsomest country churches I have ever seen. But I am interrupted in my writing, by the be-

ginning (I am told) of a very fine show. If it be so, I shall give you some account of it by and by.

Eleven at night:—The show is now finished, and has afforded us great entertainment. It was the departure of a Maltese squadron to assist the French against the Bey of Tunis, who, it seems, has fallen under the displeasure of the grand monarque, because he refused to deliver up without ransom the Corsican slaves that were taken before the French were in possession of that island. The squadron consisted of three galleys; the largest with nine hundred men, each of the others with seven hundred: three galliots, and several *scampavias*, so called from their exceeding swiftness. These immense bodies were all worked by oars, and moved with great regularity. The admiral went first, and the rest in order, according to their dignity. The sea was crowded with boats, and the ramparts and fortifications were filled with the company. The port resounded on all sides with the discharge of heavy artillery, which was answered by the galleys and galliots as they left the harbour. As the echo is here uncommonly great it produced a very noble effect.

There were about thirty knights in each galley, making signals all the way to their mistresses, who were weeping for their departure upon the bastions; for these gentlemen pay almost as little regard to their vows of chastity, as the priests and confessors do. After viewing the show from the ramparts, we took a boat and followed the squadron for some time, and did not return till long after sun-set.

We have been admiring the wonderful strength of this place, both by nature and art.—It is certainly the happiest situation that can be imagined. The city stands upon a peninsula, betwixt two of the finest ports

in the world, which are defended by almost impregnable fortifications. That on the south-east side of the city is the largest. It runs about two miles into the heart of the island, and is so very deep, and surrounded by such high grounds and fortifications, that they assured us the largest ships of war might ride here in the most stormy weather, almost without a cable.

This beautiful bason is divided into five distinct harbours, all equally safe, and each capable of containing an immense number of shipping. The mouth of the harbour is scarcely a quarter of a mile broad, and is commanded on each side by batteries that would tear the strongest ship to pieces before she could enter. Besides this, it is fronted by a quadruple battery, one above the other, the largest of which is a *fleur d'eau*, or on a level with the water. These are mounted with about 80 of their heaviest artillery; so that this harbour, I think, may really be considered as impregnable; and indeed the Turks have ever found it so, and I believe ever will.

The harbour on the north side of the city, although they only use it for fishing, and as a place of quarantine, would, in any other part of the world, be considered as inestimable. It is likewise defended by very strong works; and in the centre of the bason there is an island on which they have built a castle and a lazaret.

The fortifications of Malta are indeed a most stupendous work. All the boasted catacombs of Rome and Naples are a trifle to the immense excavations that have been made in this little island. The ditches, of a vast size, are all cut out of the solid rock. These extend for a great many miles; and raise our astonishment to think that so small a state has ever been able to make them.

One side of the island is so completely fortified by nature, that there was nothing left for art. The rock is of a great height, and absolutely perpendicular from the sea for several miles. It is very singular, that on this side there are still the vestiges of several ancient roads, with the tracks of carriages worn deep in the rocks: these roads are now terminated by the precipice, with the sea beneath; and shew to a demonstration, that this island has in former ages been of a much larger size than it is at present; but the convulsion that occasioned its diminution is probably much beyond the reach of any history or tradition. It has often been observed, notwithstanding the very great distance of Mount Ætna, that this island has generally been more or less affected by its eruptions, and they think it probable, that on some of those occasions a part of it may have been shaken into the sea.

We have now an opportunity of observing that one half of Mount Ætna is clearly discovered from Malta. They reckon the distance near 200 Italian miles. And the people here assure us, that in the great eruptions of that mountain, their whole island is illuminated; and from the reflection in the water, there appears a great track of fire in the sea all the way from Malta to Sicily. The thundering of the mountain is likewise distinctly heard.—Good night.—I am fatigued with this day's expedition, and shall finish my letter to-morrow.

June 6. As the city of Valetta is built upon a hill, none of the streets except the key are level. They are all paved with white free-stone, which not only creates a great dust, but from its colour is likewise so offensive to the eyes, that most of the people here are remarkably weak sighted. The principal buildings are the palace of the grand master, the infirmary, the arsenal, the inns

or hotels of the Seven Tongues, and the great church of St John. The palace is a noble though a plain structure, and the grand master (who studies convenience more than magnificence) is more comfortably and commodiously lodged than any prince in Europe, the king of Sardinia perhaps only excepted. The great stair is the easiest and the best I ever saw.

St John's is a magnificent church. The pavement, in particular, is reckoned the richest in the world. It is entirely composed of sepulchral monuments of the finest marbles, porphyry, lapis lazuli, and a variety of other valuable stones admirably joined together, and at an incredible expence; representing in a kind of Mosaic, the arms, insignia, &c. of the persons whose names they are intended to commemorate. In the magnificence of these monuments, the heirs of the grand masters and commanders have long vied with each other.

We went this day to see the celebration of their church service. It seems to be more overcharged with parade and ceremony than what I have ever observed even in any other catholic country. The number of genuflections before the altar, the kissing of the prior's hand, the holding up of his robes by the subaltern priests, the ceremony of throwing incense upon all the knights of the great cross, and neglecting the poorer knights, with many other articles, appeared to us highly ridiculous; and most essentially different indeed from that purity and simplicity of worship that constitutes the very essence of true Christianity, and of which the great pattern they pretend to copy set so very noble an example.

This day (the 6th of June) is held as a thanksgiving for their deliverance from a terrible conspiracy that was formed about twenty-one years ago, by the Turkish

slaves; at one stroke to put an end to the whole order of Malta. All the fountains of the place were to be poisoned; and every slave had taken a solemn oath to put his master to death.

It was discovered by a Jew, who kept a coffeehouse. He understood the Turkish language, and overheard some discourse that he thought suspicious. He went immediately and informed the grand master. The suspected persons were instantly seized and put to the torture, and soon confessed the whole plot. The executions were shocking. One hundred and twenty-five were put to death by various torments. Some were burned alive, some were broken on the wheel, and some were torn to pieces by the four galleys rowing different ways, and each bringing off its limb. Since that time, the slaves have been much more strictly watched, and have less liberty than formerly. Adieu. I shall write to you again before we leave Malta. Yours, &c.

LETTER XVI.

Malta, June 7.

THIS day we made an expedition through the island in coaches drawn by one mule each; the only kind of vehicle the place affords. Our conductors could speak nothing but Arabic, which is still the language of the common people of Malta; so that you may believe we did not reap much benefit from their conversation. We went first to the ancient city of Melita, which is near the centre of the island, and commands a view of the whole; and in clear weather, they pretend, of part of Barbary and of Sicily. The

city is strongly fortified, and is governed by an officer called the Hahem. He received us very politely, and shewed us the old palace, which is not indeed much worth the seeing. The cathedral is a very fine church; and, although of an exceeding large size, is at present entirely hung with crimson damask richly laced with gold.

The catacombs, not far from the city, are a great work. They are said to extend for fifteen miles under ground; however, this you are obliged to take on the credit of your guides, as it would rather be risking too much to put it to the trial. Many people, they assure us, have been lost in advancing too far in them; the prodigious number of branches making it next to impossible to find the way out again.

From this we went to see the Bosquetta, where the grand master has his country palace; by the accounts we had of it at Valetta, we expected to find a forest stored with deer and every kind of game, as they talked much of the great hunts that were made every year in these woods.—We were not a little surprised to find only a few scattered trees, and about half a dozen deer; but as this is the only thing like a wood in the island, it is esteemed a very great curiosity. The palace is as little worth seeing as the forest; though indeed the prospect from the top of it is very fine. The furniture is three or four hundred years old, and in the most Gothic taste that can be imagined; but indeed the grand master seldom or never resides here.

The great source of water that supplies the city of Valetta, takes its rise near to this place; and there is an aqueduct composed of some thousand arches, that conveys it from thence to the city. The whole of this

immense work was finished at the private expence of one of the grand masters.

Not far from the old city there is a small church, dedicated to St Paul; and just by the church, a miraculous statue of the saint with a viper on his hand; supposed to be placed on the very spot on which the house stood, where he was received after his shipwreck on this island, and where he shook the viper off his hand into the fire without being hurt by it: at which time, the Maltese assure us, the saint cursed all the venomous animals of the island, and banished them for ever; just as St Patrick treated those of his favourite isle. Whether this be the cause of it or not, we shall leave to divines to determine, (though if it had, I think St Luke would have mentioned it in the Acts of the Apostles), but the fact is certain, that there are no venomous animals in Malta. They assured us, that vipers had been brought from Sicily, and died almost immediately on their arrival.

Adjoining to the church there is the celebrated grotto, in which the saint was imprisoned.—It is looked upon with the utmost reverence and veneration; and if the stories they tell of it be true, it is well entitled to it all. It is exceedingly damp, and produces (I believe by a kind of petrifaction from the water) a whitish kind of stone, which they assure us, when reduced to powder, is a sovereign remedy in many diseases, and saves the lives of thousands every year. There is not a house in the island that is not provided with it; and they tell us there are many boxes of it sent annually, not only to Sicily and Italy, but likewise to the Levant and the East Indies; and (what is considered as a daily standing miracle) notwithstanding this perpetual consumption, it has never been exhausted, nor even sensi-

bly diminished; the saint always taking care to supply them with a fresh quantity the day following.

You may be sure we did not fail to stuff our pockets with this wonderful stone; I suspected they would have prevented us, as I did not suppose the saint would have worked for heretics; however, neither he nor the priests had any objection, and we gave them a few Pauls* more for their civility. I tasted some of it, and believe it is a very harmless thing. It tastes like exceeding bad magnesia, and I believe has pretty much the same effects. They give about a tea-spoonful of it to children in the small-pox and in fevers. It produces a copious sweat about half an hour after, and, they say, never fails to be of service. It is likewise esteemed a certain remedy against the bite of all venomous animals. There is a very fine statue of St Paul in the middle of this grotto, to which they ascribe great powers.

We were delighted on our way back to the city, with the beauty of the setting-sun, much superior, I think, to what I have ever observed it in Italy. The whole of the eastern parts of the heavens, for half an hour after sun-set, was of a fine deep purple, and made a beautiful appearance: this the Maltese tell us is generally the case every evening at this season of the year.

I forgot to say any thing of our presentation to the grand master, for which I ask pardon both of you and him.—His name is Pinto, and of a Portuguese family. He has now been at the head of this singular little state for upwards of thirty years. He received us with great politeness, and was highly pleased to find that some of us had been in Portugal. He mentioned the intimate

* A small silver coin.

commercial connections that had so long subsisted betwixt our nations, and expressed his desire of being of service to us, and of rendering our stay in his island as agreeable as possible. He is a clear-headed, sensible, little old man; which, at so advanced a period of life, is very uncommon. Although he is considerably upwards of ninety, he retains all the faculties of his mind in perfection. He has no minister, but manages every thing himself; and has immediate information of the most minute occurrences. He walks up and down stairs, and even to church, without assistance; and has the appearance as if he would still live for many years. His household attendance and court are all very princely; and, as grand master of Malta, he is more absolute, and possesses more power than most sovereign princes. His titles are Serene Highness and Eminence; and as he has the disposal of all lucrative offices, he makes of his councils what he pleases; besides, in all the councils that compose the jurisdiction of this little nation, he himself presides, and has two votes. Since he was chosen grand master, he has already given away one hundred and twenty-six commanderies, some of them worth upwards of L. 2000 a-year, besides priories and other offices of profit.—He has the disposal of twenty-one commanderies and one priory every five years; and, as there are always a number of expectants, he is very much courted.

He is chosen by a committee of twenty-one; which committee is nominated by the seven nations, three out of each nation. The election must be over within three days after the death of the former grand master; and during these three days, there is scarce a soul that sleeps at Malta: all is cabal and intrigue: and most of the knights are masked, to prevent their particular

attachments and connections from being known: the moment the election is over, every thing returns again to its former channel.

The land force of Malta is equal to the number of men in the island fit to bear arms. They have about five hundred regulars belonging to the ships of war; and one hundred and fifty compose the guard of the prince. The two islands of Malta and Gozzo contain about one hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants. The men are exceedingly robust and hardy. I have seen them row from ten to twelve hours without intermission, and without even appearing to be fatigued.

Their sea force consists of four galleys, three galliots, four ships of sixty guns, and a frigate of thirty-six, besides a number of the quick-sailing little vessels called Scampavias, literally Run-aways. Their ships, galleys, and fortifications, are not only supplied with excellent artillery, but they have likewise invented a kind of ordinance of their own, unknown to all the world besides. For we found to our no small amazement, that the rocks were not only cut into fortifications, but likewise into artillery, to defend these fortifications; being hollowed out in many places into the form of immense mortars. The charge is said to be about a barrel of gun-powder, over which they place a large piece of wood, made exactly to fit the mouth of the chamber. On this they heap a great quantity of cannon balls, shells, or other deadly materials; and when an enemy's ship approaches the harbour, they fire the whole into the air; and they pretend it produces a very great effect, making a shower for two or three hundred yards round that would sink any vessel.

Notwithstanding the supposed bigotry of the Maltese, the spirit of toleration is so strong, that a mosque

has lately been built for their sworn enemies the Turks. Here the poor slaves are allowed to enjoy their religion in peace. It happened lately that some idle boys disturbed them during their service; they were immediately sent to prison, and severely punished. The police indeed is much better regulated than in the neighbouring countries, and assassinations and robberies are very uncommon; the last of which crimes the grand master punishes with the utmost severity. But he is said, perhaps in compliance with the prejudice of his nation, to be much more relax with regard to the first.

Perhaps Malta is the only country in the world where duelling is permitted by law.—As their whole establishment is originally founded on the wild and romantic principles of chivalry, they have ever found it too inconsistent with those principles to abolish duelling; but they have laid it under such restrictions as greatly to lessen its danger. These are curious enough. —The duellists are obliged to decide their quarrel in one particular street of the city; and if they presume to fight any where else, they are liable to the rigour of the law. But what is not less singular and much more in their favour, they are obliged under the most severe penalties to put up their sword, when ordered so to do, by a *woman*, a *priest*, or a *knight*.

Under these limitations, in the midst of a great city, one would imagine it almost impossible that a duel could ever end in blood; however, this is not the case; —A cross is always painted on the wall opposite to the spot where a knight has been killed, in commemoration of his fall.—We counted about twenty of those crosses.

About three months ago, two knights had a dispute at a billiard table.—One of them, after giving a great

deal of abusive language, added a blow; but to the astonishment of all Malta (in whose annals there is not a similar instance) after so great a provocation, he absolutely refused to fight his antagonist.—The challenge was repeated, and he had time to reflect on the consequences, but still he refused to enter the lists.—He was condemned to make *amende honorable* in the great church of St John for forty-five days successively; then to be confined in a dungeon without light for five years, after which he is to remain a prisoner in the castle for life. The unfortunate young man who received the blow is likewise in disgrace, as he had not an opportunity of wiping it out in the blood of his adversary.

This has been looked upon as a very singular affair, and is still one of the principal topics of conversation. The first part of the sentence has already been executed, and the poor wretch is now in his dungeon. Nor is it thought that any abatement will be made in what remains.

If the legislature in other countries punished with equal rigour those that do fight, as it does in this those that do not, I believe we should soon have an end of duelling: but I should imagine the punishment for fighting ought never to be a capital one, (but something ignominious;) and the punishment for not fighting should always be so, or at least some severe corporal punishment; for ignominy will have as little effect on the person who will submit to the appellation of coward, as the fear of death on one who makes it his [redacted] to despise it.

The Maltese still talk with horror of a storm that happened here on the 29th of October 1757, which, as it was of a very singular nature, I shall translate you

some account of it from a little book they have given me, written on that subject.

About three quarters of an hour after midnight, there appeared to the south-west of the city a great black cloud, which, as it approached, changed its colour, till at last it became like a flame of fire mixed with black smoke. A dreadful noise was heard on its approach, that alarmed the whole city. It passed over part of the port, and came first upon an English ship, which in an instant was torn to pieces, and nothing left but the hulk; part of the masts, sails, and cordage were carried along with the cloud to a considerable distance. The small boats and fellouques that fell in its way were all broken to pieces, and sunk. The noise increased, and became more frightful. A sentinel, terrified at its approach, run into his box: both he and it were lifted up, and carried into the sea, where he perished. It then traversed a considerable part of the city, and laid in ruins almost every thing that stood in its way. Several houses were laid level with the ground, and it did not leave one steeple in its passage. The bells of some of them, together with the spires, were carried to a considerable distance. The roofs of the churches were demolished and beat down, which, if it had happened in the day-time, must have had dreadful consequences, as all the world would immediately have run to the churches.

It went off at the north-east point of the city; and demolishing the light-house, is said to have mounted up in the air, with a frightful noise; and passed over the sea to Sicily, where it tore up some trees, and did other damage, but nothing considerable; as its fury had been mostly spent upon Malta. The number of killed and wounded amounted to near two hundred; and the loss of shipping, houses, and churches, was very considerable.

Several treatises have been written to account for this singular hurricane, but I have found nothing at all satisfactory. The sentiments of the people are concise and positive. They declare, with one voice, that it was a legion of devils let loose to punish them for their sins. There are a thousand people in Malta that will take their oath they saw them within the cloud, all as black as pitch, and breathing out fire and brimstone. They add, that if there had not been a few godly people amongst them, their whole city would certainly have been involved in one universal destruction.

The horse races of Malta are of a very uncommon kind. They are performed without either saddle, bridle, whip, or spur; and yet the horses are said to run full speed, and to afford a great deal of diversion. They are accustomed to the ground for some weeks before; and although it is entirely over rock and pavement, there are very seldom any accidents. They have races of asses and mules performed in the same manner, four times every year. The rider is only furnished with a machine like a shoemaker's awl, to prick on his courser if he is lazy.

As Malta is an epitome of all Europe, and an assemblage of the younger brothers, who are commonly the best, of its first families, it is probably one of the best academies for politeness in this part of the globe; besides, where every one is entitled by law as well as custom, to demand satisfaction for the least breach of it, people are under the necessity of being very exact and circumspect, both with regard to their words and actions.

All the knights and commanders have much the appearance of gentlemen, and men of the world. We met with no character in the extreme. The ridicules and prejudices of every particular nation, are by degrees

softened and wore off, by the familiar intercourse and collision with each other. It is curious to observe the effect it produces upon the various people that compose this little medley. The French skip, the German strut, and the Spanish stalk, are all mingled together in such small proportions, that none of them are striking; yet every one of these nations still retain something of their original characteristic: it is only the exuberance of it that is wore off; and it is still easy to distinguish the inhabitants of the south and north side of the Pyrenees, as well as those of the east and west side of the Rhine; for though the Parisian has, in a great measure, lost his assuming air, the Spaniard his taciturnity and solemnity, the German his formality and his pride; yet, still you see the German, the Frenchman, and the Spaniard: it is only the caricature, that formerly made them ridiculous, that has disappeared.

This institution, which is a strange compound of the military and ecclesiastic, has now subsisted for near seven hundred years; and though, I believe, one of the first-born, has long survived every other child of chivalry. It possesses great riches in most of the catholic countries of Europe; and did so in England too, before the time of Henry VIII. but that capricious tyrant did not choose that any institution, however ancient or respected, should remain in his dominions, that had any doubt of his supremacy and infallibility; he therefore seized on all their possessions, at the same time that he enriched himself by the plunder of the church. It was in vain for them to plead that they were rather a military than an ecclesiastic order, and by their valour had been of great service to Europe, in their wars against the infidels: it was not agreeable to his system ever to hear a reason for any thing; and no

person could possibly be right, that was capable of supposing that the king could be wrong.

Malta, as well as Sicily, was long under the tyranny of the Saracens; from which they were both delivered about the middle of the eleventh century, by the valour of the Normans: after which time the fate of Malta commonly depended on that of Sicily, till the emperor Charles V. about the year 1530, gave it, together with the island of Gozzo, to the knights of St John of Jerusalem, who at that time had lost the island of Rhodes. In testimony of this concession, the grand master is still obliged every year to send a falcon to the king of Sicily, or his viceroy; and on every new succession to swear allegiance, and to receive from the hands of the Sicilian monarch the investiture of these two islands.

Ever since our arrival here, the weather has been perfectly clear and serene, without a cloud in the sky; and for some time after sun-set, the heavens exhibit a most beautiful appearance, which I don't recollect to have observed any where else. The eastern part of the hemisphere appears of a rich deep purple, and the western is the true yellow glow of Claud Lorrain, that you used to admire so much. The weather, however, is not intolerably hot; the thermometer stands commonly betwixt 75 and 76. Adieu. We are now preparing for a long voyage, and it is not easy to say from whence I shall write you next. Ever yours.

LETTER XVII.

Agrigentum, June 11.

WE left the port of Malta in a sparonaro which we hired to convey us to this city.

We coasted along the island, and went to take a view of the north port, its fortifications and lazaretto. All these are very great, and more like the works of a mighty and powerful people, than of so small a state. The mortars cut out of the rock are a tremendous invention. There are about fifty of them, near the different creeks and landing-places round the island. They are directed at the most probable spots where boats would attempt a landing. The mouths of some of these mortars are about six feet wide, and they are said to throw a hundred cantars of cannon-ball or stone. A cantar is, I think, about a hundred pounds weight; so that if they do take place, they must make a dreadful havock amongst a debarkation of boats.

The distance of Malta from Gozzo is not above four or five miles, and the small island of Comminon lies betwixt them. The coasts of all the three are bare and barren, but covered over with towers, redoubts, and fortifications of various kinds.

As Gozzo is supposed to be the celebrated island of Calypso, you may believe we expected something very fine; but we were disappointed. It must either be greatly fallen off since the time she inhabited it, or the archbishop of Cambray, as well as Homer, must have flattered greatly in their painting. We looked as we went along the coast, for the grotto of the goddess, but could see nothing that resembled it. Neither could we observe those verdant banks eternally covered with flowers; nor those lofty trees for ever in blossom, that lost their heads in the clouds, and afforded a shade to the sacred baths of her and her nymphs. We saw, indeed, some nymphs; but as neither Calypso nor Eucharis seemed to be of the number, we paid little attention to them, and I was in no apprehension about

my Telemachus: Indeed, it would have required an imagination as strong as Don Quixote's, to have brought about the metamorphosis.

Finding our hopes frustrated, we ordered our sailors to pull out to sea, and bid adieu to the island of Calypso, concluding either that our intelligence was false, or that both the island and its inhabitants were greatly changed. We soon found ourselves once more at the mercy of the waves: Night came on, and our rowers began their evening song to the Virgin, and beat time with their oars. Their offering was acceptable; for we had the most delightful weather. We wrapt ourselves up in our cloaks, and slept most comfortably, having provided mattrasses at Malta. By a little after day-break, we found we had got without sight of all the islands, and saw only a part of Mount Ætna smoking above the waters. The wind sprung up fair, and by ten o'clock we had sight of the coast of Sicily.

On considering the smallness of our boat, and the great breadth of this passage, we could not help admiring the temerity of these people, who, at all seasons of the year, venture to Sicily in these diminutive vessels; yet it is very seldom that any accident happens; they are so perfectly acquainted with the weather, foretelling, almost to a certainty, every storm many hours before it comes on. The sailors look upon this passage as one of the most stormy and dangerous in the Mediterranean. It is called the canal of Malta, and is much dreaded by the Levant ships; but indeed, at this season, there is no danger.

We arrived at Sicily a little before sun-set, and landed opposite to Ragusa, and not far from the ruins of the Little Hybla; the third town of that name in the island, distinguished by the epithets of the Great (near

Mount Ætna), the Lesser (near Augusta), and the Little (just by Ragusa). Here we found a fine sandy beach, and whilst the servants were employed in dressing supper, we amused ourselves with bathing and gathering shells, of which there is a considerable variety. We were in expectation of finding the nautilus, for which this island is famous; but in this we did not succeed. However, we picked up some handsome shells, though not equal to those that are brought from the Indies.

After supper we again launched our bark, and went to sea. The wind was favourable as we could wish. We had our nightly serenade as usual, and the next day, by twelve o'clock, we reached the celebrated port of Agrigentum.

The captain of the port gave us a polite reception, and insisted on accompanying us to the city, which stands near the top of a mountain, four miles distant from the harbour, and about eleven hundred feet above the level of the sea. The road on each side is bordered by a row of exceeding large American aloes; upwards of one third of them being at present in full blow, and making the most beautiful appearance that can be imagined. The flower-stems of this noble plant are, in general, betwixt twenty and thirty feet high (some of them more), and are covered with flowers from top to bottom, which taper regularly, and form a beautiful kind of pyramid, the base or pedestal of which is the fine spreading leaves of the plant. As this is esteemed, in northern countries, one of the greatest curiosities of the vegetable tribe, we were happy at seeing it in so great perfection; much greater, I think, than I had ever seen it before.

With us, I think, it is vulgarly reckoned (though I believe falsely) that they only flower once in a hundred years. Here I was informed, that, at the latest, they always blow the sixth year; but for the most part the fifth.

As the whole substance of the plant is carried into the stem and the flowers, the leaves begin to decay, as soon as the blow is completed, and a numerous offspring of young plants are produced round the root of the old one: these are slipped off, and formed into new plantations, either for hedges or for avenues to their country houses.

The city of Agrigentum, now called *Girgenti*, is irregular and ugly; though from a few miles distance at sea, it makes a noble appearance, little inferior to that of Genoa. As it lies on the slope of the mountain, the houses do not hide one another; but every part of the city is seen.

On our arrival we found a great falling off indeed; the houses are mean, the streets dirty, crooked, and narrow.—It still contains near twenty thousand people; a sad reduction from its ancient grandeur, when it was said to consist of no less than eight hundred thousand, being the next city to Syracuse for numbers.

The Canonico Spoto, from Mr Hamilton's letter, and from our former acquaintance with him at Naples, gave us a kind and hospitable reception. He insisted on our being his guests; and we are now in his house, comfortably lodged, and elegantly entertained, which, after our crowded little apartment in the Sparonaro, is by no means a disagreeable change.—Farewell. I shall write you again soon. Ever yours.

LETTER XVIII.

Agrigentum, June 12.

WE are just returned from examining the antiquities of Agrigentum, the most considerable, perhaps, of any in Sicily.

The ruins of the ancient city lie about a short mile from the modern one. These, like the ruins of Syracuse, are mostly converted into corn fields, vineyards, and orchards; but the remains of the temples here are much more conspicuous than those of Syracuse. Four of these have stood pretty much in a right line, near the south wall of the city. The first they call the temple of Venus; almost one half of which still remains. The second is that of Concord: It may be considered as entire, not one column having as yet fallen. It is precisely of the same dimensions and same architecture as that of Venus, which had probably served as the model for it. By the following inscription, found on a large piece of marble, it appears to have been built at the expence of the Lilibitani; probably after having been defeated by the people of Agrigentum.

CONCORDIÆ AGRIGENTINORUM SACRUM,
RESPUBLICA LILIBITANORUM.
DEDICANTIBUS M. ATTERIO CANDIDO
PROCOS. ET L. CORNELIO MARCELLO. Q. P. R. P. R.

These temples are supported by thirteen large fluted Doric columns on each side; and six at each end. All their bases, capitals, entablatures, &c. still remain entire; and as the architecture is perfectly simple, without any thing affected or studied, the whole strikes the eye at

once, and pleases very much. The columns are, indeed, shorter than the Doric proportions; and they certainly are not so elegant as some of the ancient temples near Rome, and in other places in Italy.

The third temple is that of Hercules, altogether in ruins; but appears to have been of a much greater size than the former two. We measured some of the broken columns, near seven feet in diameter. It was here that the famous statue of Hercules stood, so much celebrated by Cicero; which the people of Agrigentum defended with such bravery against Verres, who attempted to seize it. You will find the whole story in his pleadings against that infamous prætor.

There was likewise in this temple a famous picture by Zeuxis. Hercules was represented in his cradle killing the two serpents: Alcmena and Amphitrion having just entered the apartment, were painted with every mark of terror and astonishment. Pliny says, the painter looked upon this piece as invaluable; and therefore could never be prevailed on to put a price upon it, but gave it as a present to Agrigentum, to be placed in the temple of Hercules. These two great masterpieces have been lost. We thought of them with regret whilst we trod on those venerable ruins.

Near to this lie the ruins of the temple of Jupiter Olympus, supposed by the Sicilian authors to have been the largest in the heathen world. It is now called *il tempio de' giganti*, or the Giants' Temple, as the poor people cannot conceive that such masses of rock could ever be put together by the hands of ordinary men. The fragments of columns are indeed enormous, and give us a vast idea of this fabric. It is said to have stood till the year 1100; but is now a perfect ruin. Our Cicerones assured us, it was exactly the same dimensions

with the church of St Peter at Rome: But in this they are egregiously mistaken; St Peter's being much greater than any thing that ever the heathen world produced.

There are the remains of many more temples, and other great works; but these, I think, are the most conspicuous. They shew you that of Vulcan, of Proserpine, of Castor and Pollux, and a very remarkable one of Juno. This too was enriched by one of the most famous pictures of antiquity; which is celebrated by many of the ancient writers.—Zeuxis was determined to excel every thing that had gone before him, and to form a model of human perfection. To this end, he prevailed on all the finest women of Agrigentum, who were even ambitious of the honour, to appear naked before him. Of these he chose five for his models, and moulding all the perfections of these beauties into one, he composed the picture of the goddess. This was ever looked upon as his masterpiece; but was unfortunately burnt when the Carthaginians took Agrigentum.—Many of the citizens retired into this temple as to a place of safety; but as soon as they found the gates attacked by the enemy, they agreed to set fire to it, and chose rather to perish in the flames, than submit to the power of the conquerors. However, neither the destruction of the temple, nor the loss of their lives, has been so much regretted by posterity, as the loss of this picture.

The temple of Æsculapius (the ruins of which are still to be seen) was not less celebrated for a statue of Apollo. It was taken from them by the Carthaginians at the same time that the temple of Juno was burnt. It was carried off by the conquerors, and continued the greatest ornament of Carthage for many years, and was

at last restored by Scipio at the final destruction of that city. Some of the Sicilians allege, I believe without any ground, that it was afterwards carried to Rome, and still remains there, the wonder of all ages, known to the whole world under the name of the Apollo of Belvidere; and allowed to be the perfection of human art.

I should be very tedious were I to give you a minute description of every piece of antiquity. Indeed, little or nothing is to be learned from the greatest part of them. The ancient walls of the city are mostly cut out of the rock; the catacombs and sepulchres are all very great: One of these is worthy particular notice, because it is mentioned by Polybius as being opposite to the temple of Hercules, and to have been struck by lightning even in his time. It remains almost entire, and answers the description he gives of it: The inscriptions are so defaced, that we could make nothing of them.

This is the monument of Tero king of Agrigentum, one of the first of the Sicilian tyrants. The great antiquity of it may be gathered from this, that Tero is not only mentioned by Diodorus, Polybius, and the later of the ancient historians, but likewise by Herodotus, and Pindar, who dedicates two of his Olympic odes to him: So that this monument must be more than two thousand years old. It is a kind of pyramid, probably one of the most durable forms.

All these mighty ruins of Agrigentum, and the whole mountain on which it stands, are composed of a concretion of sea-shells run together, and cemented by a kind of sand or gravel, and now become as hard, and perhaps more durable than even marble itself. This stone is white before it has been exposed to the air;

but in the temples and other ruins, it is become of a dark brown. I shall bring home some pieces of it for the inspection of the curious. I found these shells on the very summit of the mountain, at least fourteen or fifteen hundred feet above the level of the sea. They are of the commonest kinds, cockles, mussels, oysters, &c.

"The things we know are neither rich nor rare;
"But wonder how the devil they got there."

POPE.

By what means they have been lifted up to this vast height, and so intimately mixed with the substance of the rock, I leave to you and your philosophical friends to determine.—This old battered globe of ours has probably suffered many convulsions not recorded in any history.—You have heard of the vast stratum of bones lately discovered in Istria and Ossero:—part of it runs below rocks of marble, upwards of forty feet in thickness, and they have not yet been able to ascertain its extent: Something of the same kind has been found in Dalmatia, in the islands of the Archipelago; and lately, I am told, in the rock of Gibraltar.—Now, the deluge recorded in Scripture, will hardly account for all the appearances of this sort to be met with, almost in every country in the world.—But I am interrupted by visitors;—which is a lucky circumstance, both for you and me; for I was just going to be very philosophical, and consequently very dull. Adieu.

LETTER XIX.

Agrigentum, June 13.

THE interruption in my last, was a deputation from the bishop, to invite us to a great dinner to-mor-

row at the port; so that we shall know whether this place still deserves the character of luxury it always held amongst the ancients. We have great reason to think, from the politeness and attention we have met with, that it has never lost its ancient hospitality, for which it was likewise so much celebrated.

Plato, when he visited Sicily, was so much struck with the luxury of Agrigentum, both in their houses and their tables, that a saying of his is still recorded; that they build as if they were never to die, and eat as if they had not an hour to live. It is preserved by Ælian, and is just now before me.

He tells a story by way of illustration, which shews a much greater conformity of manners, than one could have expected, betwixt the young nobility amongst the ancients, and our own at this day.

He says, that after a great feast, where there was a number of young people of the first fashion, they got all so much intoxicated, that from their reeling and tumbling upon one another, they imagined they were at sea, in a storm, and began to think themselves in the most imminent danger: at last they agreed, that the only way to save their lives was to lighten the ship, and with one accord began to throw the rich furniture out of the windows, to the great edification of the mob below; and did not stop till they had entirely cleared the house of it, which, from this exploit, was ever after denominated the *triremes*, or the ship. He says it was one of the principal palaces of the city, and retained this name for ever. In Dublin, I have been told, there are more than one triremes; and that this frolic, which they call throwing the house out of the window, is by no means uncommon.

At the same time that Agrigentum is abused by the

ancient authors for its drunkenness, it is as much celebrated for its hospitality; and, I believe, it will be found, that this virtue, and this vice, have ever had a sort of sneaking kindness for each other, and have generally gone hand in hand, both in ancient and in modern times. The Swiss, the Scots, and the Irish, who are at present the most drunken people in Europe, are likewise, in all probability, the most hospitable; whereas, in the very sober countries, Spain, Portugal, and Italy, hospitality is a virtue very little known, or indeed any other virtue, except sobriety; which has been produced, probably a good deal from the tyranny of their government, and their dread of the Inquisition; for where every person is in fear, lest his real sentiments should appear, it would be very dangerous to unlock his heart; but in countries where there are neither civil nor ecclesiastical tyrants to lay an embargo on our thoughts, people are under no apprehension lest they should be known.

However, these are not the only reasons. The moral virtues and vices may sometimes depend on natural causes.—The very elevated situation of this city, where the air is exceedingly thin and cold, has perhaps been one reason why its inhabitants are fonder of wine than their neighbours in the valleys.

The same may be said of the three nations I have mentioned; the greatest part of their countries lying amongst hills and mountains, where the climate renders strong liquors more necessary; or, at least, less pernicious, than in low places.—It is not surprising that this practice, probably begun amongst the mountains, where the air is so keen, has by degrees crept down into the valleys, and has at last become almost epidemical in those countries.

Fazzello, after railing at Agrigentum for its drunkenness, adds, that there was no town in the island so

celebrated for its hospitality. He says that many of the nobles had servants placed at the gates of the city, to invite all strangers to their houses. It is in reference to this, probably, that Empedocles says, that even the gates of the city proclaimed a welcome to every stranger. From our experience we are well entitled to say, that the people of Agrigentum still retain this antiquated virtue, so little known in polite countries. To-morrow we shall have a better opportunity of judging whether it is still accompanied by its sister vice.

The accounts that the old authors give of the magnificence of Agrigentum are amazing; though indeed there are none of them that proclaim it in stronger terms than the monuments that still remain.—Diodorus says, the great vessels for holding water were commonly of silver, and the litters and carriages for the most part were of ivory richly adorned. He mentions a pond made at an immense expence, full of fish and of water fowl, that in his time was the great resort of the inhabitants on their festivals; but he says, that even then (in the age of Augustus) it was going to ruin, requiring too great an expence to keep it up. There is not now the smallest vestige of it: But there is still to be seen a curious spring of water that throws up a kind of oil on its surface, which is made use of by the poor people, in many diseases. This is supposed to mark out the place of the celebrated pond; which is recorded by Pliny and Solinus to have abounded with this oil.

Diodorus, speaking of the riches of Agrigentum, mentions one of its citizens returning victorious from the Olympic games, and entering his city attended by three hundred chariots, each drawn by four white horses richly caparisoned; and gives many other instances of their vast profusion and luxury.

Those horses, according to that author, were esteemed all over Greece for their beauty and swiftness; and their race is celebrated by many of the ancient writers.

" Arduus inde Agragas ostentat maxima longe
" Mœnia, magnanimum quondam generator equorum,"

says Virgil in the third Æneid; and Pliny acquaints us, that those which had been often victorious at the games were not only honoured with burial rites, but had magnificent monuments erected to eternize their memory. This Timeus confirms: He tells us, that he saw at Agrigentum several pyramids built as sepulchral monuments to celebrated horses: He adds, that when those animals became old and unfit for service, they were always taken care of, and spent the remainder of their lives in ease and plenty.—I could wish that our countrymen would imitate the gratitude and humanity of the Sicilians in this article; at least the latter part of it. I don't know that our nation can so justly be taxed with cruelty or ingratitude in any other article as in their treatment of horses, the animal that of all others is the most entitled to our care. How piteous a thing it is, on many of your great roads, to see the finest old hunters, that were once the glory of the chase, condemned, in the decline of life, to the tyranny of the most cruel oppressors; in whose hands they suffer the most extreme misery, till they at last sink under the task that is assigned them. I am called away to see some more antiques, but shall finish this letter to-night, as the post goes off for Italy to-morrow morning.

18*th*, afternoon. We have seen a great many old walls and vaults that little or nothing can be made of. They give them names, and pretend to tell you what they were, but as they bear no resemblance to those

things now, it would be no less idle to trouble you with their nonsense than to believe it. We have indeed seen one thing that has amply repaid us for the trouble we have taken. It is the representation of a boar-hunting, in alto relievo, on white marble; and is at least equal, if not superior, to any thing of the kind I have met with in Italy. It consists of four different parts, which form the history of this remarkable chase and its consequences.

The first is the preparation for the hunt. There are twelve hunters, with each his lance, and a short hanger under his left arm of a very singular form. The dogs resemble those we call lurchers. The horses are done with great fire and spirit, and are perhaps a better proof of the excellence of the race, than even the testimony of their authors; for the artist that formed these must certainly have been accustomed to see very fine horses.

The second piece represents the chase.—The third the death of the king, by a fall from his horse.—And the fourth the despair of the queen and her attendants on receiving the news. She is represented as falling down in a swoon, and supported by her women, who are all in tears.

It is executed in the most masterly style, and is indeed one of the finest remains of antiquity. It is preserved in the great church, which is noted through all Sicily for a remarkable echo; something in the manner of our whispering gallery at St Paul's, though more difficult to be accounted for.

If one person stands at the west gate, and another places himself on the cornice, at the most distant point of the church, exactly behind the great altar, they can hold a conversation in very low whispers.

For many years this singularity was little known;

and several of the confessing chairs being placed near the great altar, the wags, who were in the secret, used to take their station at the door of the cathedral; and by this means heard distinctly every word that passed betwixt the confessor and his penitent; of which, you may believe, they did not fail to make their own use when occasion offered.—The most secret intrigues were discovered; and every woman in Agrigentum changed either her gallant or her confessor. Yet still it was the same.—At last, however, the cause was found out; the chairs were removed, and other precautions were taken, to prevent the discovery of these sacred mysteries; and a mutual amnesty passed amongst all the offended parties.

Agrigentum, like Syracuse, was long subject to the yoke of tyrants. Fazzello gives some account of their cruelty, but I have no intention of repeating it; one story, however, pleased me; it is a well-known one, but as it is short, you shall have it.

Perillo, a goldsmith, by way of paying court to Phalaris the tyrant, made him a present of a brazen bull, of admirable workmanship; hollow within, and so contrived that the voice of a person shut up in it, sounded exactly like the bellowing of a real bull. The artist pointed out to the tyrant what an admirable effect this must produce, were he only to shut up a few criminals in it, and make a fire under them.

Phalaris, struck with so horrid an idea, and perhaps curious to try the experiment, told the goldsmith that he himself was the only person worthy of animating his bull: that he must have studied the note that made it roar to the greatest advantage, and that it would be unjust to deprive him of any part of the honour of his invention. Upon which he ordered the goldsmith to be

shut up, and made a great fire around the bull; which immediately began to roar, to the admiration and delight of all Agrigentum. Cicero says, this bull was carried to Carthage at the taking of Agrigentum; and was restored again by Scipio after the destruction of that city.

Fazzello adds another story, which is still more to the honour of Phalaris. Two friends, Melanippus and Cariton, had conspired his death. Cariton, in hopes of saving his friend from the danger of the enterprise, determined to execute it alone. However, in his attempt to poignard the tyrant, he was seized by the guards, and immediately put to the torture, to make him confess his accomplice: this he bore with the utmost fortitude, refusing to make the discovery; till Melanippus, informed of the situation of his friend, ran to the tyrant, assuring him, that he alone was the guilty person; that it was entirely by his instigation that Cariton had acted; and begged that he might be put on the rack in the place of his friend. Phalaris, struck with such heroism, pardoned them both.

Notwithstanding this generous action, he was in many respects a barbarous tyrant. Fazzello gives the following account of his death, with which I shall conclude this letter, for I am monstrously tired, and, I dare say, so are you. Zeno, the philosopher, came to Agrigentum, and being admitted into the presence of the tyrant, advised him, for his own comfort, as well as that of his subjects, to resign his power, and lead a private life. Phalaris did not relish these philosophical sentiments; and suspecting Zeno to be in a conspiracy with some of his subjects, ordered him to be put to the torture in presence of the citizens of Agrigentum.

Zeno immediately began to reproach them with cow-

ardice and pusillanimity in submitting tamely to the yoke of so worthless a tyrant; and in a short time raised such a flame, that they defeated the guards, and stoned Phalaris to death.—I dare say you are glad they did it so quickly.—Well, I shall not write such long letters for the future; for, I assure you, it is at least as troublesome to the writer as the reader. Adieu. We shall sail to-morrow or next morning for Trapani, from whence you may expect to hear from me. We are now going out to examine more antique walls, but I shall not trouble you with them. Farewell.

LETTER XX.

June 16.

WHEN I have nothing else to do, I generally take up the pen. We are now on the top of a high mountain about half way betwixt Agrigentum and Palermo. Our sea expedition by Trapani has failed, and we are determined to put no more confidence in that element, happy beyond measure to find ourselves at a distance from it, though in the most wretched of villages. We have travelled all night on mules; and arrived here about ten o'clock, overcome with sleep and fatigue. We have just had an excellent dish of tea, which never fails to cure me of both; and I am now as fresh as when we set out. It has not had the same effect on my companions: they have thrown themselves down on a vile straw bed in the corner of the hovel; and in spite of a parcel of starved chickens, that are fluttering about and picking the straws all around them, they are already fast asleep.

I shall seize that time to recapitulate what has happened since my last.

The day after I wrote you, we made some little excursions round Agrigentum. The country is delightful; producing corn, wine, and oil in the greatest abundance: the fields are, at the same time, covered with a variety of the finest fruits; oranges, lemons, pomegranates, almonds, pistachio-nuts, &c. These afforded us almost as agreeable an entertainment as the consideration of the ruins from whence they spring.

We dined with the bishop according to agreement, and rose from table convinced that the ancient Agrigentini could not possibly understand the true luxury of eating better than their descendents, to whom they have transmitted a very competent portion both of their social virtues and vices. I beg their pardon for calling them vices. I wish I had a softer name for it; it looks like ingratitude for their hospitality, for which we owe them so much.

We were just thirty at table, but, upon my word, I do not think we had less than a hundred dishes of meat. These were drest with the richest and most delicate sauces; and convinced us, that the old Roman proverb of "Siculus coquus et Sicula mensa," was not more applicable in their time than it is at present. Nothing was wanting that could be invented to stimulate and to flatter the palate, and to create a false appetite as well as to satisfy it. Some of the very dishes so much relished by the Roman epicures made a part of the feast; particularly the morene, which is so often mentioned by their authors: it is a species of eel, found only in this part of the Mediterranean, and sent from hence to several of the courts of Europe. It is not so fat and luscious as other eels, so that you can eat a good deal

more of it: its flesh is white as snow, and is indeed a very great delicacy. But a modern refinement in luxury has, I think, still produced a greater: by a particular kind of management they make the livers of their fowls grow to a large size, and at the same time acquire a high and rich flavour. It is indeed a most incomparable dish; but the means of procuring it is so cruel, that I will not even trust it with you. Perhaps, without any bad intention, you might mention it to some of your friends, they to others, till at last it might come into the hands of those that would be glad to try the experiment; and the whole race of poultry might ever have reason to curse me: let it suffice to say, that it occasions a painful and lingering death to the poor animal: that, I know, is enough to make you wish never to taste of it, whatever effect it may have upon others.

The Sicilians eat of every thing, and attempted to make us do the same. The company was remarkably merry, and did by no means belie their ancient character, for most of them were more than half seas *over* long before we rose from table; and I was somewhat apprehensive of a second edition of the Triremes scene, as they were beginning to reel exceedingly. By the by, I do not doubt but that phrase of *Half seas over*, may have taken its origin from some such story. They begged us to make a bowl of punch, a liquor they had often heard of, but had never seen. The materials were immediately found, and we succeeded so well, that they preferred it to all the wines on the table, of which they had a great variety. We were obliged to replenish the bowl so often, that I really expected to see most of them under the table. They called it Pontio, and spoke loudly in its praise; declaring that

Pontio (alluding to Pontius Pilate) was a much better fellow than they had ever taken him for. However, after dinner, one of them, a reverend canon, grew excessively sick, and while he was throwing up, he turned to me with a rueful countenance, and shaking his head, he groaned out, "Ah, Signior Capitano, sapeva sempre che Pontio era un grande traditore."—"I always knew that Pontius was a great traitor." Another of them overhearing him, exclaimed—"Aspettatevi Signor Canonico."—"Not so fast," said he, "my good canon."—"Niente al pregiudizio di Signor Pontio, vi prego.—Recordate, che Pontio v'ha fatto un canonico;—et Pontio ha fatto sua eccellenza una Vescovo—Non scordatevi mai di vostri amici."

Now, what do you think of these reverend fathers of the church? Their merit, you will easily perceive, does not consist in fasting and prayer.—Their creed, they say, they have a good deal modernized, and is much simpler than that of Athanasius.—One of them told me, that if we would but stay with them for some little time, we should soon be convinced that they were the happiest fellows on earth. "We have exploded (said he) from our system every thing that is dismal or melancholy; and are persuaded, that of all the roads in the universe, the road to heaven must be the pleasantest and least gloomy; if it be not so (added he), God have mercy upon us, for I am afraid we shall never get there." I told him I could not flatter him; "that if laughing was really a sin, as some people taught, they were certainly the greatest of all sinners." "Well (said he), we shall at least endeavour to be happy here; and that, I am persuaded, is the best of all preparations for happiness hereafter. Abstinence (continued he) from all innocent and lawful pleasures, we reckon one of the greatest sins, and guard against it

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

with the utmost care: and I am pretty sure it is a sin that none of us here will ever be damned for."—He concluded by repeating two lines, which he told me was their favourite maxim; the meaning of which was exactly those of Mr Pope:

> "For God is paid when man receives,
> "To enjoy is to obey."

This is not the first time I have met with this libertine spirit amongst the Roman Catholic clergy. There is so much nonsense and mummery in their worship, that they are afraid lest strangers should believe they are serious; and perhaps too often fly to the opposite extreme.

We were, however, much pleased with the bishop; he is greatly and deservedly respected, yet his presence did nowise diminish, but rather increased the jollity of the company. He entered into every joke, joined in the repartee, at which he is a great proficient, and entirely laid aside his episcopal dignity; which, however, I am told, he knows very well how to assume when it is necessary. He placed us next to himself, and behaved indeed, in every respect, with the greatest ease and politeness. He is one of the first families of the island, and brother to the prince of——. I had his whole pedigree pat, but now I have lost it, no matter: he is an honest, pleasant little fellow, and that is of much more consequence. He is not yet forty; and so high a promotion, in so early a period of life, is reckoned very extraordinary, this being the richest bishopric in the kingdom. He is a good scholar, and very deeply read, both in ancient and modern learning; and his genius is in no degree inferior to his erudition. The similarity of character and circumstances struck me so strongly, that I could scarce help thinking I.

had got beside our worthy and respectable friend, the B——p of D——y, which, I assure you, still added greatly to the pleasure I had in his company. I told the bishop of this; adding, that he was brother to L——d B——l: he seemed much pleased, and said, he had often heard of the family, both when Lord B—— was ambassador in Spain, and his other brother commander in the Mediterranean.

We found in this company a number of Free Masons, who were delighted beyond measure when they discovered that we were their brethren. They pressed us to spend a few more days amongst them, and offered us letters to Palermo, and every other town we should think of visiting; but the heats are increasing so violently, that we were afraid of prolonging our expedition, lest we should be caught by the Sirocco winds, supposed to blow from the burning deserts of Africa, and sometimes attended with dangerous consequences to those that travel over Sicily.

But I find I have omitted several circumstances of our dinner. I should have told you, that it was an annual feast given by the nobility of Agrigentum to the bishop. It was served in an immense granary, half full of wheat, on the sea shore, chosen on purpose to avoid the heat. The whole was on plate: and what appeared singular to us, but I believe is a much better method than ours, great part of the fruit was served up with the second course, the first dish of which that went round was strawberries. The Sicilians were a good deal surprised to see us eat them with cream and sugar, yet upon trial they did not at all dislike the composition.

The dessert consisted of a great variety of fruits, and still a greater of ices: these were so disguised in

the shapes of peaches, figs, oranges, nuts, &c. that a person unaccustomed to ices might very easily have been taken in, as an honest sea-officer was lately at the house of a certain minister of your acquaintance, not less distinguished for the elegance of his table, than the exact formality and subordination to be observed at it. After the second course was removed, and the ices, in the shape of various fruits and sweetmeats, advanced by way of rear-guard; one of the servants carried the figure of a fine large peach to the captain, who, unacquainted with deceit of any kind, never doubted that it was a real one; and cutting it through the middle, in a moment had one large half of it in his mouth; at first he only looked grave, and blew up his cheeks to give it more room; but the violence of the cold soon getting the better of his patience, he began to tumble it about from side to side in his mouth, his eyes rushing out of water, till at last, able to hold no longer, he spit it out upon his plate, exclaiming with a horrid oath, "A painted snowball, by G—d!" and wiping away his tears with his napkin, he turned in a rage to the Italian servant that had helped him, with a "D—n your maccaroni eyes, you son of a ——, what did you mean by that?"——The fellow, who did not understand a word of it, could not forbear smiling, which still convinced the captain the more that it was a trick; and he was just going to throw the rest of the snowball in his face, but was prevented by one of the company; when recovering from his passion, and thinking the object unworthy of it, he only added, in a softer tone, "Very well, neighbour, I only wish I had you on board ship for half an hour, you should have a dozen before you could say Jack Robinson, for all your painted cheeks."

I ask pardon for this digression, but as it is a good laughable story, I know you will excuse it. About six o'clock, we took a cordial leave of our jolly friends at Agrigentum; and we embarked on board our sparonaro at the new port. I should have told you, that this harbour has lately been made at a very great expence; this city having always been one of the principal ports of the island for the exportation of grain. The bishop and his company went into a large barge, and sailed round the harbour; we saluted them as we went out; they returned the compliment, and we took a second leave. The evening was fine, and we coasted along for a good many miles; we passed several points and little promontories, that were exceedingly beautiful and picturesque; many of them were covered with noble large aloes in full blow. In one place, I counted upwards of two hundred of those fine majestic plants all in flower; a sight which I imagined was hardly to be met with in the world.—After sun-set,—alas, fain would I conceal what happened after sun-set! but life, you know, is chequered with good and evil, and it would have been great presumption to receive so much of the one, without expecting a little dash of the other too.—Besides, a sea expedition is nothing without a storm. Our journal would never have been readable, had it not been for this.—Well, I assure you, we had it. It was not indeed so violent as the great one off Louisburgh, or perhaps even that described by Virgil; the reading of which is said to have made people sea-sick; but it was rather too much for our little bark.—I was going to tell you, that after sun-set the sky began to overcast, and in a short time the whole atmosphere appeared fiery and threatening. We attempted to get into some creek, but could find none. The

wind grew loud, and we found it was in vain to proceed; but as the night was dark and hazy, we were dubious about the possibility of reaching the port of Agrigentum. However, this was all we had for it, as there were none other within many miles. Accordingly we tacked about, and plying both oars and sail, with great care not to come amongst the rocks and breakers, in about two hours we spied the light-house; by which we directed our course, and got safely into port betwixt one and two in the morning: we lay down on our mattrass, and slept sound till ten, when finding the falsity of our hypothesis, that there could be no bad weather in the Mediterranean at this season, we unanimously agreed to have nothing more to do with sparonaros, and sent immediately to engage mules to carry us over the mountains to Palermo. The storm continued with violence the whole day, and made us often thank heaven that we had got safely back. It was not till five in the afternoon that we had mules, guides, and guards provided us; when we set off, pretty much in the same order, and in the same equipage as we had done about three weeks ago from Messina. Our guards attempted to fill us with the most dreadful apprehensions of this road, shewing us, every mile, where such a one was robbed, such another was murdered; and entertained us with such melancholy ditties the greatest part of the way. Indeed, if one half of their stories be true, it is certainly the most dangerous road in the world; but I looked upon most of them as fictions, invented only to increase their own consequence, and to procure a little more money. There is, indeed, some foundation for these stories; as there are numbers of gibbets erected on the road *in terrorem;* and every little baron has the power of life

and death in his own domain. Our bishop's brother, whose name I have forgot, seized lately four and twenty of those desperate banditti, after a stout resistance, where several were killed on both sides; and notwithstanding that some of them were under the protection of the nobility, and in their service, they were all hanged. However, this has by no means rooted them out. Our guards, in the suspicious places, went with their pieces cock'd, and kept a close look-out to either side of them; but we saw nothing to alarm us, except the most dreadful roads in the world; in many places worse than any thing I ever met with amongst the Alps.

After travelling about twenty miles, we arrived by two in the morning at the most wretched—I don't know what to call it—there was not any one thing to be had but a little straw for the mules. However, after a good deal of difficulty, we at last got fire enough to boil our tea-kettle, and having brought bread from Agrigentum, we made an excellent meal. Our tea-table was a round stone in the field, and as the moon shone bright, we had no occasion for any other luminary. You may believe our stay here was as short as possible; the house was too dreadfully nasty to enter it, and the stable was full of poor wretches sleeping on the bare ground. In short, I never saw in any country so miserable an inn, for so it is styled. We mounted our cavalry with all expedition, and in a very short time got into the woods, where we were serenaded by the nightingale as we went along, who made us a full apology and atonement for the bad cheer we had met with. In a short time it was day, and then we had entertainment enough from the varied scenes of the most beautiful, wild, and romantic country in the world. ——The fertility of many of the plains is truly astonish-

ing, without enclosures, without manure, and almost without culture. It is with reason that this island was styled "Romani imperii horreum," the granary of the Roman empire. Were it cultivated, it would still be the great granary of Europe. Pliny says, it yielded a hundred after one; and Diodorus, who was a native of the island, and wrote on the spot, assures us, that it produced wheat and other grain spontaneously; and Homer advances the same fact in the Odyssey:

> "The soil untill'd, a ready harvest yields,
> "With wheat and barley wave the golden fields;
> "Spontaneous wines from weighty clusters pour,
> "And Jove descends in each prolific shower."
>
> POPE.

Many of the mountains seemed to be formed by subterraneous fire; several of them retain their conical figure and their craters, but not so exact as those on Mount Ætna, as they are probably much older. I likewise observed many pieces of lava on the road, and in the beds of the torrents; and a good deal of the stone called tufa, which is certainly the production of a volcano; so that I have no doubt, that a great part of this island, as well as the neighbouring ones of Lipari, &c. has been originally formed by subterraneous fire: we likewise passed some quarries of a kind of talc, and also of a coarse alabaster; of this they make a sort of stucco or plaster, resembling that of Paris; but what I much regretted, we missed seeing the famous salt of Agrigentum, found in the earth about four or five miles from that city. It has this remarkable property, different from all other salt, that in the fire it presently melts; but in the water it cracks and splits, but never dissolves. It is celebrated by Pliny, Aristotle, and others of the ancient, as well as the modern naturalists. Fazzello, whom I have brought along with me to read

by the road, says, he has often experienced this: he adds, from the authority of these ancient authors, that they formerly had mines of this salt, so pure and solid, that the statuaries and sculptors preferred it to marble, and made various works of it.

The poor people of the village have found us out, and with looks full of misery have surrounded our door. —Accursed tyranny,—what despicable objects we become in thy hands!—Is it not inconceivable how any government should be able to render poor and wretched a country which produces almost spontaneously every thing that even luxury can desire? But alas! poverty and wretchedness have ever attended the Spanish yoke, both on this, and on the other side of the globe.—They make it their boast, that the sun never sets on their dominions, but forget that since they became such, they have left him nothing to see in his course but deserted fields, barren wildernesses, oppressed peasants, and lazy, lying, lecherous monks.—Such are the fruits of their boasted conquests.—They ought rather to be ashamed, that ever the sun should see them at all. —The sight of these poor people has filled me with indignation. This village is surrounded by the finest country in the world, yet there was neither bread nor wine to be found in it, and the poor inhabitants appear more than half starved.

> "'Mongst Ceres' richest gifts with want oppress'd,
> "And 'midst the flowing vineyard, die of thirst."

I shall now think of concluding, as I do not recollect that I have much more to say to you: besides, I find myself exceedingly sleepy. I sincerely wish it may not be the same case with you before you have read thus far. We have ordered our mules to be ready by five

o'clock, and shall again travel all night;—the heats are too great to allow of it by day; adieu.—These two fellows are still sound asleep.—In a few minutes I shall be so too, for the pen is almost dropping out of my hand. Farewell.

LETTER XXI.

Palermo, June 19.

WE are now arrived at the great capital of Sicily, which, in our opinion, in beauty and elegance is greatly superior to Naples. It is not, indeed, so large; but the regularity, the uniformity, and neatness of its streets and buildings render it much more pleasing; it is full of people, who have mostly an air of affluence and gaiety. And indeed we seem to have got into a new world.—But stop—not so fast.—I had forgot that you have still fifty miles to travel on a cursed stubborn mule, over rocks and precipices; for I can see no reason why we should bring you at once into all the sweets of Palermo, without bearing at least some little part of the fatigues of the journey. Come, we shall make them as short as possible.

We left you, I think, in a little village on the top of a high mountain. We should indeed use you very ill, were we to leave you there any longer; for I own it is the very worst country quarter that ever fell to my lot. Howeyer, we got a good comfortable sleep in it, the only one thing it afforded us; and the fleas, the bugs, and chickens, did all that lay in their power even to deprive us of that, but we defied them. Our two

leaders came to awake us before five, apostrophying their entry with a detail of the horrid robberies and murders that had been committed in the neighbourhood; all of them, you may be sure, on the very road that we were to go.

Our whole squadron was drawn out, and we were ranged in order of battle by five o'clock, when we began our march, attended by the whole village, man, woman, and child. We soon got down amongst the woods, and endeavoured to forget the objects of misery we had left behind us. The beauty and richness of the country increased in proportion as we advanced. The mountains, although of a great height, (that we have left is near four thousand feet, the mercury standing at twenty-six inches two lines), are covered to the very summit with the richest pasture. The grass in the valleys is already burnt up, so that the flocks are all upon the mountains. The gradual separation of heat and cold is very visible in taking a view of them. The valleys are brown and scorched, and so are the mountains to a considerable height; they then begin to take a shade of green, which grows deeper and deeper, and covers the whole upper region; however, on the summit, the grass and corn are by no means so luxuriant as about the middle. We were amazed at the richness of the crops, far superior to any thing I had ever seen either in England or Flanders, where the happy soil is assisted by all the arts of cultivation; whilst here, the wretched husbandman can hardly afford to give it a furrow; and gathers in with a heavy heart the most luxuriant harvest. To what purpose is it given him? Only to lie a dead weight upon his hand, sometimes till it is entirely lost; exportation being prohibited to all such as cannot pay exorbitantly for it to the sovereign.—

What a contrast is there betwixt this and the little uncouth country of Switzerland!—to be sure, the dreadful consequences of oppression can never be set in a more striking opposition to the blessings and charms of liberty. Switzerland, the very excrescence of Europe, where Nature seems to have thrown out all her cold and stagnating humours; full of lakes, marshes, and woods, and surrounded by immense rocks, and everlasting mountains of ice, the barren, but sacred, ramparts of liberty: Switzerland, enjoying every blessing, where every blessing seems to have been denied: whilst Sicily, covered by the most luxuriant hand of Nature, where Heaven seems to have showered down its richest blessings with the utmost prodigality, groans under the most abject poverty, and, with a pale and wan visage, starves in the midst of plenty.—It is liberty alone that works this standing miracle.—Under her plastic hands the mountains sink, the lakes are drained; and these rocks, these marshes, these woods, become so many sources of wealth and of pleasure.—But what has temperance to do with wealth?

" Here reigns Content,
" And Nature's child, Simplicity; long since
" Exiled from polish'd realms."
" 'Tis Industry supplies
" The little Temperance wants; and rosy Health
" Sits smiling at the board."

You will begin to think I am in danger of turning poetical in these classic fields;—I am sure I neither suspected any of the mountains we have passed to be Parnassus; nor did I believe any one of the Nine foolish enough to inhabit them, except Melpomene perhaps, as she is so fond of tragical faces: however, I shall now get you out of them as soon as possible, and bring you

once more into the gay world. I assure you, I have often wished that you could have lent me your muse on this expedition; my letters would then have been more worth the reading; but you must take the will for the deed.

After travelling till about midnight, we arrived at another miserable village, where we slept for some hours on straw, and continued our journey again by day-break. We had the pleasure of seeing the rising sun from the top of a pretty high mountain, and were delighted with the prospect of Strombolo, and the other Lipari islands, at a great distance from us. On our descent from this mountain, we found ourselves on the banks of the sea, and took that road, preferable to an inland one, although several miles nearer. We soon lighted from our mules, and plunged into the water, which has ever made one of our greatest pleasures in this expedition; nobody that has not tried it, can conceive the delight of this; after the fatigue of such a journey, and passing three days without undressing. Your friend Fullarton, though only seventeen, but whose mind and body now equally despise every fatigue, found himself strong as a lion, and fit to begin such another march. We boiled our tea-kettle under a fig-tree, and eat a breakfast that might have served a company of strolling players.

The approach to Palermo is fine. The alleys are planted with fruit-trees, and large American aloes in full blow.—Near the city we passed a place of execution, where the quarters of a number of robbers were hung up upon hooks, like so many hams; some of them appeared newly executed, and made a very unsightly figure. On our arrival, we learned that a priest and three others had been taken a few days ago, after

an obstinate defence, in which several were killed on both sides; the priest, rather than submit to his conquerors, plunged his hanger into his breast, and died on the spot: the rest submitted, and were executed.

As there is but one inn in Palermo, we were obliged to agree to their own terms (five ducats a-day). We are but indifferently lodged; however, it is the only inn we have yet seen in Sicily, and, indeed, may be said to be the only one in the island. It is kept by a noisy troublesome Frenchwoman, who, I find, will plague us: there is no keeping her out of our rooms, and she never comes in without telling us of such a prince and such a duke, that were so superlatively happy at being lodged in her house; we can easily learn, that they were all desperately in love with her; and indeed she seems to take it very much amiss, that we are not inclined to be of the same sentiments. I have already been obliged to tell her, that we are very retired sort of people, and do not like company; I find she does not esteem us the better for it; and this morning (as I passed through the kitchen without speaking to her) I overheard her exclaim, "Ah mon Dieu! comme ces Anglois sont sauvages." I believe we must take more notice of her, otherwise we shall certainly have our rent raised; but she is as fat as a pig, and as ugly as the devil, and lays on a quantity of paint on each of her swelled cheeks, that looks like a great plaster of red Morocco. Her picture is hanging in the room where I am now writing, as well as that of her husband, who, by the by, is a ninny; they are no less vile curiosities than the originals.—He is drawn with his snuff-box open in one hand, and a dish of coffee in the other; and at the same time, *fait l'amiable à Madame*. I took notice of this triple occupation, which seemed to imply

something particular. She told me that the thought was her's; that her husband was exceedingly fond of snuff and of coffee, and wanted by this to shew, that he was still more occupied with her than with either of them.—I could not help applauding the ingenuity of the conceit. Madame is painted with an immense bouquet in her breast, and an orange in her right hand, emblematic of her sweetness and purity: and has the prettiest little smirk on her face you can imagine. She told me, that she insisted on the painter drawing her *avec le souris sur le visage*, but as he had not *esprit* enough to make her smile naturally, she was obliged to force one, "qui n'étoit pas tout-à-fait si jolie que le naturel, mais qui vaudroit toujours mieux que de paroitre sombre." I agreed with her perfectly; and assured her it became her very much; "parceque les dames grasses sont toujours de bonne humeur."—I found however that she would willingly have excused me the latter part of the compliment, which more than lost all that I had gained by the former. "Il est vrai (said she, a good deal piqued), j'ai un peu de l'embonpoint, mais pas tant grasse pourtant." I pretended to excuse myself, from not understanding all the finesse of the language; and assured her, that *de l'embonpoint* was the very phrase I meant to make use of. She accepted the apology, and we are again reconciled; for, to give the devil his due, they are good humoured. She made a curtsey, and repeated, "Oui, Monsieur, pour parler comme il faut, il faut dire *de l'embonpoint*.—On ne dit pas grasse." I assured her bowing to the ground, that the word should for ever be rased from my vocabulary. She left me with a gracious smile, and a courtesy, much lower than the first; adding, "Je sçavois bien que Monsieur étoit un homme comme il faut;" at the same

time tripping off on her tiptoes, as light as a feather, to show me how much I had been mistaken. This woman made me recollect (what I have always observed) how little the manners of the French are to be changed by their connection with other nations; allowing none to be in any degree worthy of imitation but their own. Although she has now been here these twenty years, she is still as perfectly French, as if she had never been without the gates of Paris; and looks upon every woman in Palermo with the utmost contempt, because they have never seen that capital, nor heard the sublime music of its opera. She is likewise (allowing for the difference of rank) an admirable epitome of all French women, whose universal passion has ever been the desire of admiration, and of appearing young: and ever would be, I believe, were they to live to the age of a thousand. Any person that will take a look of the withered death's heads in their public places, covered over with a thick mask of paint, will be convinced of this.—Now, our old ladies when they get to the wrong side of sixty, generally take a jump up to the borders of fourscore, and appear no less vain of their years than ever they were of their youth. I know some of them, that I am sure are not less happy, nor less contented, nor (I might almost add) less admired with their wrinkles, than ever they were with their dimples. I do not know whether a cheerful old woman, who is willing to appear so, is more respectable, or more estimable; or a withered witch, who fills up every wrinkle with varnish, and at fourscore attempts to give herself the bloom of four and twenty is ridiculous and contemptible;—but as dinner is on the table, I shall leave it to you to determine. Adieu!

LETTER XXII.

Palermo, June 23.

I SHALL have a great deal to write you about this city; we are every day more delighted with it, and shall leave it with much regret. We have now delivered our letters, in consequence of which we are loaded with civilities, and have got into a very agreeable set of acquaintance.—But I shall first attempt to give you some little idea of the town, and then speak of its inhabitants. It is by much the most regular I have seen, and is built upon that plan which, I think, all large cities ought to follow. The two great streets intersect each other in the centre of the city, where they form a handsome square, called the Ottangolo, adorned with elegant uniform buildings. From the centre of this square you see the whole of these noble streets, and the four great gates of the city which terminate them; the symmetry and beauty of which produce a fine effect. The whole of these are to be magnificently illuminated some time next month, and must certainly be the finest sight in the world. The four gates are each at the distance of about half a mile (the diameter of the city being no more than a mile): these are elegant pieces of architecture richly adorned; particularly the *Porta Nova* and *Porta Felice*, terminating the great street called the *Corso*, that runs south-west and north-east. The lesser streets in general run parallel to these great ones; so that from every part of the city, in a few minutes walking, you are sure to arrive at one of the capital streets. The *Porta Felice* (by much the handsomest of these gates) opens to the *Marino*, a delightful walk,

which constitutes one of the great pleasures of the nobility of Palermo. It is bounded on one side by the wall of the city, and on the other by the sea; from whence, even at this scorching season, there is always an agreeable breeze. In the centre of the Marino they have lately erected an elegant kind of temple, which during the summer months is made use of as an orchestra for music; and as in this season they are obliged to convert the night into day, the concert does not begin till the clock strikes midnight, which is the signal for the symphony to strike up: at that time the walk is crowded with carriages and people on foot; and the better to favour pleasure and intrigue, there is an order, that no person, of whatever quality, shall presume to carry a light with him. The flambeaux are extinguished at the Porta Felice, where the servants wait for the return of the carriages; and the company generally continue an hour or two together in utter darkness; except when the intruding moon, with her horns and her chastity, comes to disturb them. The concert finishes about two in the morning, when, for the most part, every husband goes home to his own wife. This is an admirable institution, and never produces any scandal: no husband is such a brute as to deny his wife the Marino; and the ladies are so cautious and circumspect on their side, that the more to avoid giving offence, they very often put on masques.

Their other amusements consist chiefly in their *Conversaziones*, of which they have a variety every night. There is one general one, supported by the subscription of the nobility, which is open every evening at eight, and continues till midnight, when the Music begins. It better deserves the name of a conversation than any I have seen in Italy; for there the people really come to

converse, whereas in Italy they only go to play at cards and eat ices. I have observed, that seldom or never one half of the company is engaged in play, nor do they either play long or deep. There are a number of apartments belonging to this conversation, illuminated with wax lights, and kept exceedingly cool and agreeable; and it is indeed altogether one of the most sensible and comfortable institutions I have seen: besides this, there are generally a number of particular conversations every night, and what will a good deal surprise you, these are always held in the apartments of the lying-in ladies; for in this happy climate, child-bearing is divested of all its terrors, and is only considered as a party of pleasure. This circumstance we were ignorant of, till t'other morning. The Duke of Verdura, who does us the honours of the place, with great attention and politeness came to tell us, we had a visit to make, that was indispensable. "The Princess Paterna (said he) was brought to bed last night; and it is absolutely incumbent on you to pay your respects to her this evening." At first I thought he was in joke, but he assured me he was serious, and that it would be looked upon as a great unpoliteness to neglect it.—Accordingly we went about sun-set, and found the princess setting up in her bed, in an elegant undress, with a number of her friends around her. She talked as usual, and seemed to be perfectly well. This conversation is repeated every night during her convalescence, which generally lasts for about eleven or twelve days. This custom is universal, and as the ladies here are very prolific, there are for the most part three or four of these assemblies going on in the city at the same time; possibly the Marino may not a little contribute towards them.

The Sicilian ladies marry at thirteen or fourteen, and

are sometimes grandmothers before they are thirty.—The Count Stetela presented us a few days ago to his cousin, the Princess Partana, who he told us had a great number of children, the eldest of which was a very fine girl of fifteen. We talked to the princess for half an hour, not in the least doubting all the time that she was the daughter, till at last the young lady came in; and even then, it was not easy to say which appeared the handsomest or the youngest. This lady has had twelve children, and is still in her bloom; she assured me that she never enjoyed more perfect health than when she was in childbed;—that during the time of her pregnancy she was often indisposed, but that immediately on delivery she was cured of all her complaints, and was capable of enjoying the company of her friends even more than at any other time. I expressed my surprise at this very singular happiness of their climate or constitutions; but she appeared still more surprised when I told her that we lost many of our finest women in childbed, and that even the most fortunate and easy deliveries were attended with violent pain and anguish. She lamented the fate of our ladies, and thanked Heaven that she was born a Sicilian.

What this singularity is owing to, let the learned determine; but it is surely one of the capital blessings of these climates, where the curse that was laid upon mother Eve seems to be entirely taken off: I don't know how the ladies here have deserved this exemption, as they have at least as much both of Eve and the serpent as ours have, and still retain their appetite, as strong as ever, for forbidden fruit.—It seems hard, that in our own country, and in Switzerland, where the women in general are the chastest in Europe, that this curse should fall the heaviest: it is probably owing to the

climate:—In cold, but more particularly in mountainous countries, births are difficult and dangerous; in warm and low places they are more easy; the air of the first hardens and contracts the fibres, that of the second softens and relaxes them. In some places in Switzerland, and amongst the Alps, they lose almost one half of their women in childbed, and those that can afford it, often go down to the low countries some weeks before they lie in, and find their deliveries much easier. One may easily conceive what a change it must make upon the whole frame, to add the pressure of a column of air of two or three thousand feet more than it is accustomed to: and if muscular motion is performed by the pressure of the atmosphere, as some have alleged, how much must this add to the action of every muscle!—However, if this hypothesis were true, our strength should have been diminished one-third on the top of Ætna, which did not appear to be the case; as we had passed through one-third of the quantity of air of the whole atmosphere. I have often thought that physicians pay too little attention to these considerations; and that in skilful hands they might be turned to great account, in the cure of many diseases: they only send their patients to such a degree of latitude, but never think of the degree of altitude in the atmosphere. Thus, people with the same complaints are sent to Aix and to Marseilles, although the air in these two places must be essentially different. Marseilles is on the level of the sea, and Aix (as I myself measured it) is near six hundred feet above it.—Now I am persuaded, that in such a country as Switzerland, or on such a mountain as Ætna, where it is easy at all times to take off a pressure from the human body of many thousand pounds weight, that an ingenious physician

might make great discoveries; nor indeed would these discoveries be confined to the changing of the quantity of air that presses on the body, but would likewise be extended to the changing of the quality of the air we breathe; which, on the side of Ætna, or any very high mountain, is more varied than in travelling through fifty degrees of latitude. I beg pardon for this digression; the only amends I can make, is to put it out of my power to trouble you with any more, and thus abruptly assure you how much, &c.

LETTER XXIII.

Palermo, June 26.

OUR fondness for Palermo increases every day, and we are beginning to look forward with regret to the time of our leaving it, which is now fast approaching. We have made acquaintance with many sensible and agreeable people. The Sicilians appear frank and sincere; and their politeness does not consist in shew and grimace, like some of the polite nations of the continent. The viceroy sets the pattern of hospitality, and he is followed by the rest of the nobles. He is an amiable, agreeable man, and, I believe, is as much beloved and esteemed as a viceroy to an absolute monarch can be. He was in England in his youth, and is still fond of many of our authors, with whom he seems to be intimately acquainted; he speaks the language tolerably well, and encourages the learning of it amongst his people.—He may be considered with regard to Naples, as what the lord lieutenant of Ireland is with regard to England, with this trifling difference, that, like his master, he is invested with absolute authority; and keeps

his parliament (for he has one too) in the most perfect subjection. The patriots here, although a very numerous body, have never been able to gain one point, no nor a place, nor even a pension for a needy friend. Had Lord Townshend the power of the Marquis Fogliano, I suppose your Hibernian squabbles (of which we hear so much, even at this distant corner) would soon have an end.—Notwithstanding this great authority, he is affable and familiar, and makes his house agreeable to every body. We go very often to his assemblies, and have dined with him several times; his table is served with elegance and magnificence, much superior indeed to that of his Sicilian majesty, who eats off a service of plate, at least three hundred years old, very black and rusty indeed: I heard a gentleman ask one day, whilst we were standing round the table, if it had not been dug out of Herculaneum. That of the viceroy is very elegant, and indeed the whole of his entertainments correspond with it; though we have as yet seen nothing here to be compared to the luxury of our feast in the granary at Agrigentum.

The Sicilian cookery is a mixture of the French and Spanish; and the Olio still preserves its rank and dignity in the centre of the table, surrounded by a numerous train of fricasees, fricandeaus, ragouts, and pet de loups; like a grave Spanish don amidst a number of little smart marquises.—The other nobility, whom we have had occasion to see, are likewise very magnificent in their entertainments; but most particularly in their deserts and ices, of which there is a greater variety than I have seen in any other country. They are very temperate with regard to wine; though, since we have taught them our method of toasting ladies, they are fond of it, and of hob and nobing with their friends, ring-

ing the two glasses together; this social practice has animated them so much, that they have been sometimes led to drink a greater quantity than they are accustomed to; and they often reproach us with having made them drunkards. In their ordinary living they are very frugal and temperate; and from the sobriety we have seen here, we are now more persuaded that the elevated situation of Agrigentum must be one great cause of its drunkenness.

The Sicilians have always had the character of being very amorous, and surely not without reason. The whole nation are poets, even the peasants; and a man stands a poor chance for a mistress, that is not capable of celebrating her praises. I believe it is generally allowed that the pastoral poetry had its origin in this island: and Theocritus, after whom they still copy, will ever be looked upon as the prince of pastoral poets. And indeed in music too, as well as poetry, the soft, amorous pieces, are generally styled *Siciliani*; these they used to play all night under their mistresses' windows, to express the delicacy of their passion; but serenading is not now so much in fashion as it was during the time of their more intimate connexion with Spain, when it was said by one of their authors, that no person could pass for a man of gallantry that had not got a cold; and was sure never to succeed in making love, unless he made it in a hoarse voice. The ladies are not now so rigid, and will sometimes condescend to hear a man, even although he should speak in a clear tone.—Neither do they any longer require the prodigious martial feats that were then necessary to win them. —The attacking of a mad bull, or a wild boar, was reckoned the handsomest compliment a lover could pay to his mistress; and the putting these animals to death softened her heart much more than all the sighing love-

sick tales that could be invented. This has been humourously ridiculed by one of their poets. He says that Cupid's little golden dart was now changed into a massy spear, which answered a double purpose; for at the same time that it pierced the tough bull's hide, it likewise pierced the tender lady's heart.—But these Gothic customs are now confined to Spain, and the gentle Sicilians have re-assumed their softness. To tell you the truth, gallantry is pretty much upon the same footing here as in Italy; the establishment of Ciccisbees is pretty general, though not quite so universal as on the continent. However, a breach of the marriage vow is no longer looked upon as one of the deadly sins; and the confessors fall upon easy and pleasant enough methods of making them atone for it. The husbands are content; and, like able generals, make up for the loss of one fortress, by the taking of another. However, female licentiousness has by no means come to such a height as in Italy. We have seen a great deal of domestic happiness; husbands and wives that truly love one another, and whose mutual care and pleasure is the education of their children. I could name a number;—the Duke Verdura, the Prince Partana, the Count Buscemi, and many others, who live in the most sacred union. Such sights are very rare on the continent. But indeed the style that young people are brought up in here, seems to lay a much more solid foundation for matrimonial happiness, than either in France or Italy. The young ladies are not shut up in convents till the day of their marriage, but for the most part live in the house with their parents, where they receive their education, and are every day in company with their friends and relations. From what I can observe, I think they are allowed almost as much liberty as with us. In their great assem-

blies we often see a club of young people (of both sexes) get together in a corner, and amuse themselves for hours, at cross purposes or such like games, without the mothers being under the least anxiety; indeed, we sometimes join in these little parties, and find them extremely entertaining. In general they are quick and lively, and have a number of those *jeux d'esprit*, which, I think, must ever be a proof, in all countries, of the familiar intercourse betwixt the young people of the two sexes; for all these games are insipid, if they are not seasoned by something of that invisible and subtile agency, which renders every thing more interesting in these mixed societies, than in the lifeless ones, composed of only one part of the species. Thus, in Italy, Spain, and Portugal, I have never seen any of these games; in France seldom, but in Switzerland (where the greatest liberty and familiarity are enjoyed amongst the young people) they are numberless.——But the conversation hour is arrived, and our carriage is waiting.—Adieu.

LETTER XXIV.

Palermo, June 28.

THERE are two small countries, one to the east, the other to the west of this city, where the principal nobility have their country palaces. Both these we have visited; there are many noble houses in each of them. That to the east is called La Bagaria, that to the west, Il Colle.—We are this instant returned from La Bagaria, and I hasten to give you an account of the ridiculous things we have seen, though perhaps you will not thank me for it.

The palace of the Prince of Valguanera is, I think, by much the finest and most beautiful of all the houses of the Bagaria; but it is far from being the most extraordinary: were I to describe it, I should only tell you of things you have often seen and heard of in other countries, so I shall only speak of one, which, for its singularity, certainly is not to be paralleled on the face of the earth; it belongs to the Prince of P—— a man of immense fortune, who has devoted his whole life to the study of monsters and chimeras, greater and more ridiculous than ever entered into the imagination of the wildest writers of romance and knight-errantry.

The amazing crowd of statues that surround his house, appear at a distance like a little army drawn up for its defence; but when you get amongst them, and every one assumes his true likeness, you imagine you have got into the regions of delusion and enchantment; for of all that immense group, there is not one made to represent any object in nature; nor is the absurdity of the wretched imagination that created them less astonishing than its wonderful fertility. It would require a volume to describe the whole, and a sad volume indeed it would make. He has put the heads of men to the bodies of every sort of animal, and the heads of every other animal to the bodies of men. Sometimes he makes a compound of five or six animals that have no sort of resemblance in nature. He puts the head of a lion to the neck of a goose, the body of a lizard, the legs of a goat, the tail of a fox. On the back of this monster, he puts another, if possible still more hideous, with five or six heads, and a bush of horns, that beats the beasts in the Revelations all to nothing. There is no kind of horn in the world that he has not collected; and his pleasure is to see them all flourishing upon the

same head. This is a strange species of madness; and it is truly unaccountable that he has not been shut up many years ago; but he is perfectly innocent, and troubles nobody by the indulgence of his frenzy; on the contrary, he gives bread to a number of statuaries and other workmen, whom he rewards in proportion as they can bring their imaginations to coincide with his own; or, in other words, according to the hideousness of the monsters they produce. It would be idle and tiresome to be particular in an account of these absurdities. The statues that adorn, or rather deform the great avenue, and surround the court of the palace, amount already to six hundred, notwithstanding which, it may be truly said, that he has not broke the second commandment; for of all that number, there is not the likeness of any thing in heaven above, in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth. The old ornaments, which were put up by his father, who was a sensible man, appear to have been in a good taste. They have all been knocked to pieces, and laid together in a heap, to make room for this new creation.

The inside of this enchanted castle corresponds exactly with the out; it is in every respect as whimsical and fantastical, and you cannot turn yourself to any side, where you are not stared in the face by some hideous figure or other. Some of the apartments are spacious and magnificent, with high-arched roofs; which, instead of plaster or stucco, are composed entirely of large mirrors, nicely joined together. The effect that these produce, (as each of them make a small angle with the other), is exactly that of a multiplying glass; so that when three or four people are walking below, there is always the appearance of three or four hundred walking above. The whole of the doors are

likewise covered over with small pieces of mirror, cut into the most ridiculous shapes, and intermixed with a great variety of crystal and glass of different colours. All the chimney-pieces, windows, and side-boards, are crowded with pyramids and pillars of tea-pots, caudle-cups, bowls, cups, saucers, &c. strongly cemented together; some of these columns are not without their beauty: one of them has a large china chamber-pot for its base, and a circle of pretty little flower-pots for its capital; the shaft of the column, upwards of four feet long, is composed entirely of tea-pots of different sizes, diminished gradually from the base to the capital. The profusion of china that has been employed in forming these columns is incredible; I dare say there is not less than forty pillars and pyramids formed in this strange fantastic manner.

Most of the rooms are paved with fine marble tables of different colours, that look like so many tomb-stones. Some of these are richly wrought with lapis lazuli, porphyry, and other valuable stones; their fine polish is now gone, and they only appear like common marble; the place of these beautiful tables he has supplied by a new set of his own invention, some of which are not without their merit. These are made of the finest tortoise-shell, mixed with mother of pearl, ivory, and a variety of metals; and are mounted on fine stands of solid brass.

The windows of this enchanted castle are composed of a variety of glass of every different colour, mixed without any sort of order or regularity: Blue, red, green, yellow, purple, violet. So that at each window, you may have the heavens and earth of whatever colour you choose, only by looking through the pane that pleases you.

The house clock is cased in the body of a statue; the eyes of the figure move with the pendulum, turning up their white and black alternately, and make a hideous appearance.

His bed-chamber and dressing-room are like two apartments in Noah's ark; there is scarce a beast, however vile, that he has not placed there; toads, frogs, serpents, lizards, scorpions, all cut out in marble, of their respective colours. There are a good many busts too, that are not less singularly imagined.—Some of these make a very handsome profile on one side; turn to the other, and you have a skeleton; here you see a nurse with a child in her arms; its back is exactly that of an infant; its face is that of a wrinkled old woman of ninety.

For some minutes one can laugh at these follies, but indignation and contempt soon get the better of your mirth, and the laugh is turned into a sneer. I own I was soon tired of them; though some things are so strangely fancied, that it may well excuse a little mirth, even from the most rigid cynic.

The family statues are charming; they have been done from some old pictures, and make a most venerable appearance; he has dressed them out from head to foot in new and elegant suits of marble; and indeed the effect it produces is more ridiculous than any thing you can conceive. Their shoes are all of black marble, their stockings generally of red; their clothes are of different colours, blue, green, and variegated, with a rich lace of *giall' antique*. The periwigs of the men and head dresses of the ladies are of fine white; so are their shirts with long flowing ruffles of alabaster. The walls of the house are covered with some fine basso relievos of white marble, in good taste; these be

could not well take out or alter, so he has only added immense frames to them. Each frame is composed of four large marble tables.

The author and owner of this singular collection is a poor miserable lean figure, shivering at a breeze, and seems to be afraid of every body he speaks to; but (what surprised me) I have heard him talk speciously enough on several occasions. He is one of the richest subjects in the island, and it is thought he has not laid out less than L. 20,000 in the creation of this world of monsters and chimeras.—He certainly might have fallen upon some way to prove himself a fool at a cheaper rate. However, it gives bread to a number of poor people, to whom he is an excellent master. His house at Palermo is a good deal in the same style; his carriages are covered with plates of brass, so that I really believe some of them are musket proof.

The government have had serious thoughts of demolishing the regiment of monsters he has placed round his house, but as he is humane and inoffensive, and as this would certainly break his heart, they have as yet forborne. However, the seeing of them by women with child is said to have been already attended with very unfortunate circumstances; several living monsters having been brought forth in the neighbourhood. The ladies complain that they dare no longer take an airing in the Bagaria; that some hideous form always haunts their imagination for some time after: their husbands too, it is said, are as little satisfied with the great variety of horns.—Adieu. I shall write you again by next post, as matter multiplies fast upon me in this metropolis.

Ever yours.

LETTER XXV.

Palermo, June 30.

THE account the people give us here of the Sirocc, or south-east wind, is truly wonderful; to-day, at the viceroy's, we were complaining of the violence of the heat, the thermometer being at seventy-nine.—They assured us, that if we staid till the end of next month, we should probably look on this as pleasant cool weather; adding, that if we had once experienced the Sirocc, all other weather will appear temperate.—I asked to what degree the thermometer commonly rose during this wind; but found to my surprise, that there was no such instrument in use amongst them: however, the violence of it, they assure us, is incredible; and that those who had remained many years in Spain and Malta, had never felt any heat in those countries to compare to it.—How it happens to be more violent in Palermo than in any other part of Sicily, is a mystery that still remains to be unfolded. Several treatises have been written on this subject, but none that give any tolerable degree of satisfaction. As we shall stay for some time longer, it is possible we may have an opportunity of giving you some account of it.

They have begun some weeks ago to make preparations for the great feast of St Rosolia; and our friends here say they are determined that we shall not leave them till after it is over; but this I am afraid will not be in our power. The warm season advances, and the time we appointed for our return to Naples is already elapsed; but indeed, return when we will, we shall make but a bad exchange; and were it not for those

of our own country whom we have left behind us, we certainly should have determined on a much longer stay. But although the society here is superior to that of Naples, yet,—call it prejudice—or call it what you will, there is a—*je ne sçai quoi*,—a certain confidence in the character, the worth and friendship of our own people, that I have seldom felt any where on the continent, except in Switzerland. This sensation, which constitutes the charm of society, and can alone render it supportable for any time, is only inspired by something analogous and sympathetic in our feelings and sentiments; like two instruments that are in unison, and vibrate to each other's touch: for society is a concert, and if the instruments are not in tune, there never can be harmony; and (to carry on the metaphor) this harmony too must sometimes be heightened and supported by the introduction of a discord; but where discords predominate, which is often the case between an English and an Italian mind, the music must be wretched indeed. Had we but a little mixture of our own society, how gladly should we spend the winter in Sicily; but we often think with regret on Mr Hamilton's and Mr Walter's families; and wish again to be on the continent. Indeed, even the pleasures we enjoy here, we owe principally to Mr Hamilton: his recommendations we have ever found to be the best passport and introduction; and the zeal and cordiality with which these are always received, proceeds evidently not from motives of deference and respect to the minister, but of love and affection to the man.

This morning we went to see a celebrated convent of Capuchins, about a mile without the city; it contains nothing very remarkable but the burial-place, which indeed is a great curiosity. This is a vast sub-

terraneous apartment, divided into large commodious galleries, the walls on each side of which are hollowed into a variety of niches, as if intended for a great collection of statues; these niches, instead of statues, are all filled with dead bodies, set upright upon their legs, and fixed by the back to the inside of the niche: their number is about three hundred: they are all dressed in the clothes they usually wore, and form a most respectable and venerable assembly. The skin and muscles, by a certain preparation, become as dry and hard as a piece of stock-fish; and although many of them have been here upwards of two hundred and fifty years, yet none are reduced to skeletons; the muscles, indeed, in some appear to be a good deal more shrunk than in others; probably because these persons had been more extenuated at the time of their death.

Here the people of Palermo pay daily visits to their deceased friends, and recall with pleasure and regret the scenes of their past life: here they familiarize themselves with their future state, and choose the company they would wish to keep in the other world. It is a common thing to make choice of their niche, and to try if their body fits it, that no alterations may be necessary after they are dead; and sometimes, by way of a voluntary penance, they accustom themselves to stand for hours in these niches.

The bodies of the princes and first nobility are lodged in handsome chests or trunks, some of them richly adorned: these are not in the shape of coffins, but all of one width, and about a foot and a half, or two feet deep. The keys are kept by the nearest relations of the family, who sometimes come and drop a tear over their departed friends.

I am not sure if this is not a better method of dis-

posing of the dead than ours. These visits must prove admirable lessons of humility; and I assure you, they are not such objects of horror as you would imagine: they are said, even for ages after death, to retain a strong likeness to what they were when alive; so that, as soon as you have conquered the first feeling excited by these venerable figures, you only consider this as a vast gallery of original portraits, drawn after the life, by the justest and most unprejudiced hand. It must be owned that the colours are rather faded; and the pencil does not appear to have been the most flattering in the world; but no matter, it is the pencil of truth, and not of a mercenary, who only wants to please. We were alleging too, that it might be made of very considerable utility to society; and that these dumb orators could give the most pathetic lectures upon pride and vanity. Whenever a fellow began to strut, like Mr B. or to affect the haughty supercilious air, he should be sent to converse with his friends in the gallery; and if their arguments did not bring him to a proper way of thinking, I would give him up as incorrigible.

At Bologna they shewed us the skeleton of a celebrated beauty, who died at a period of life when she was still the object of universal admiration. By way of making atonement for her own vanity, she bequeathed herself as a monument, to curb the vanity of others. Recollecting on her deathbed the great adulation that had been paid to her charms, and the fatal change they were soon to undergo, she ordered that her body should be dissected, and her bones hung up for the inspection of all young maidens who are inclined to be vain of their beauty. However, if she had been preserved in this moral gallery, the lesson would have been

stronger; for those very features that had raised her vanity would still have remained, only divested of all their power, and disarmed of every charm.

Some of the Capuchins sleep in these galleries every night, and pretend to have many wonderful visions and revelations; but the truth is, that very few people believe them.

No woman is ever admitted into this convent either dead or alive; and this interdiction is written in large characters over the gate. The poor indolent Capuchins, the frailest of all flesh, have great need of such precautions: they have no occupation from without, and they have no resources within themselves; so that they must be an easy prey to every temptation: Bocaccio, and all the books of that kind, are filled with stories of their frailty.—Yesterday, dining at the Prince of Sperlinga's, and talking on this subject, the Abbe T—— gave us an anecdote of a friend of his, who was formerly a brother of this convent. He is known by the name of Fra. Pasqual, and has passed through many singular scenes of life, which it would be too long to recount. His last migration, or, if you will, transmigration, was from one of the banditti of this kingdom, in which capacity he had been enrolled for some time; but, tired of the danger and fatigue to which he was perpetually exposed, he at last determined to exchange the character of the hero for that of the saint, and try if it was not both safer and surer to rely on the weakness of others than on our own strength.

Fra. Pasqual pretended a strong compunction for the transgressions of his past life, and made a promise to the Virgin, that the remainder of it should be spent in mortification and penance, to atone for them. To

this end Pasqual took the vows of poverty and of chastity, and entered into all the rigours of the monastic life.—For some weeks he behaved in a most exemplary manner; he went barefooted, wore a large rosary, and a thicker cord of discipline than any monk in the convent; and his whole deportment gave testimony of the most unfeigned repentance: however, the devil was still at work in the heart of Pasqual, and all these external mortifications only made him work the harder; in short, he found it impossible to drive him out: Pasqual was sensible of this; and afraid lest the enemy should at last get the better of him, he thought it advisable to leave at Palermo the character of sanctity he had acquired, and begin somewhere else upon a new score. He embarked for Naples, where he was soon admitted into a Capuchin convent.

As Pasqual knew from experience, that the dull uniformity of the monastic life required some little amusements to render it supportable, the first thing he set about was to find a mistress. He made love to a lady of easy virtue, who soon admitted his addresses, but at the same time informed him, that he had a formidable rival, who was jealous as a tiger, and would not fail to put them both to death, should he discover the intrigue. This was no other than a lifeguard-man, a fellow of six feet two inches, with a vast spada, like that of Goliah, and a monstrous pair of curled whiskers, that would have cast a damp on the heart of any man but Fra. Pasqual; but the monastic life had not yet enervated him; he was accustomed to danger, and loved a few difficulties; however, as in his present character he could not be on a footing with his rival, he thought it best only to make use of prudence and stratagem to supplant him: these are the ecclesiastical

arms, and they have generally been found too hard for the military.

The lady promised him an interview so soon as the court should go to Portici, where the lifeguard-man's duty obliged him to attend the king. Pasqual waited with impatience for some time; at last the wished-for night arrived; the king set off, after the opera, with all his guards. Pasqual flew like lightning to the arms of his mistress; the preliminaries were soon settled, and the happy lovers had just fallen asleep, when they were suddenly alarmed by a rap and a well-known voice at the door. The lady started up in an agony of despair, assuring Pasqual that they were both undone; that this was her lover; and if some expedient was not fallen upon, in the first transports of his fury, he would certainly put them both to death. There was no time for reflection; the lifeguard-man demanded entrance in the most peremptory manner, and the lady was obliged to instant compliance. Pasqual had just time to gather his rags together, and cram himself in below the bed; at that instant the door opened, and the giant came in, rattling his arms and storming at his mistress, for having made him wait so long; however, she soon pacified him. He then ordered her to strike a light, that he might see to undress:—this struck Pasqual to the soul, and he gave himself up for lost; however, the lady's address saved him, when he least expected it. In bringing the tinder, she took care to let fall some water into the box; and all the beating she and her lover could beat, they could not produce one spark. Every stroke of the flint sounded in Pasqual's ears like the death-knell; but when he heard the lifeguard-man swearing at the tinder for not kindling, he began to conceive some hopes, and blessed the fertile invention of woman.

—The lady told him he might easily get a light at the guard, which was at no great distance.—Pasqual's heart leaped with joy;—but when the soldier answered that he was absent without leave, and durst not be seen, it again began to flag about on his ordering *her* to go—it died within him, and he now found himself in greater danger than ever. The lady herself was disconcerted; but quickly recovering, she told him, it would be too long before she could get dressed; but advised him to go to the corner of a neighbouring street, where there was a lamp burning before the Virgin Mary, who could have no objection to his lighting a candle at it.—Pasqual revived; but the soldier declared he was too much fatigued with his walk, and would rather undress in the dark; he at the same time began to grope below the bed for a bottle of liquors, which he knew stood there.—Pasqual shook like a Quaker,—however, still he escaped.—The lady observing what he was about, made a spring, and got him the bottle, at the very instant he was within an inch of seizing Pasqual's head.—The lady then went to bed, and told her lover, as it was a cold night, she would warm his place for him. Pasqual admired her address, and began to conceive some hopes of escaping.

His situation was the most irksome in the world; the bed was so low, that he had no room to move; and when the great heavy lifeguard-man entered it, he found himself squeezed down to the ground. He lay trembling and stifling his breath for some time, but found it absolutely impossible to support his situation till morning; and indeed, if it had, his clothes, which were scattered about, must infallibly discover him: he therefore began to think of making his escape; but he could not move without alarming his rival, who was

now lying above him. At first he thought of rushing suddenly out, and throwing himself into the street; but this he disdained, and, on second thoughts, determined to seize the lifeguard-man's sword, and either put him to death, or make an honourable capitulation both for himself and the lady. In the midst of these reflections, his rival began to snore, and Pasqual declares that no music was ever so grateful to his soul. He tried to stir a little, and finding that it did not awake the enemy, he by degrees worked himself out of his prison. He immediately laid hold of the great spada;—when all his fears forsook him, and he felt as bold as a lion. He now relinquished the dastardly scheme of escaping, and only thought how he could best retaliate on his rival, for all that he had made him suffer.

As Pasqual was stark naked, it was no more trouble to him to put on the soldier's clothes than his own; and as both his cloak and his cappouch together were not worth a sixpence, he thought it most eligible to equip himself à la militaire, and to leave his sacerdotal robes to the soldier. In a short time he was dressed cap-à-pié. His greasy cowl, his cloak, his sandals, his rosary, and his rope of discipline, he gathered together, and placed on a chair before the bed; and girding himself with a great buff belt, instead of the cordon of St Francis, and grasping his trusty toledo instead of the crucifix, he sallied forth into the street. He pondered for some time what scheme to fall upon; and at first thought of returning in the character of another lifeguard-man, pretending to have been sent by the officer with a guard in quest of his companion, who not being found in his quarters, was supposed to have deserted; and thus, after having made him pay heartily for all that he had suffered under the bed, to leave him to the enjoyment of his

panic, and the elegant suit of clothes he had provided him. However, he was not satisfied with this revenge, and determined on one still more solid. He went to the guard, and told the officer that he had met a Capuchin friar, with all the ensigns of his sanctity about him, skulking through the streets, in the dead of night, when they pretend to be employed in prayer for the sins of mankind. That prompted by curiosity to follow him, the holy friar, as he expected, went straight to the house of a celebrated courtezan; that he saw him admitted, and listened at the window till he heard them go to bed together; that if he did not find this information to be true, he should resign himself his prisoner, and submit to whatever punishment he should think proper.

The officer and his guard delighted to have such a hold of a Capuchin, (who pretend to be the very models of sanctity, and who revile in a particular manner the licentious life of the military), turned out with the utmost alacrity, and, under the conduct of Pasqual, surrounded the lady's house. Pasqual began thundering at the door, and demanded entrance for the officer and his guard. The unhappy soldier waking with the noise, and not doubting that it was a detachment sent to seize him, gave himself up to despair, and instantly took shelter in the very place that Pasqual had so lately occupied; at the same time laying hold of all the things he found on the chair, never doubting that they were his own clothes. As the lady was somewhat dilatory in opening the door, Pasqual pretended to put his foot to it, when up it flew, and entering with the officer and his guard, demanded the body of a Capuchin friar, who they were informed lodged with her that night. The lady had heard Pasqual go out, and having no suspicion that he would inform against himself, she protested her

innocence in the most solemn manner, taking all the saints to witness that she knew no such person: but Pasqual, suspecting the retreat of the lover, began groping below the bed, and soon pulled out his own greasy cowl and cloak;—"Here (said he to the officer)—here are proofs enough: I'll answer for it, *Signor Padre* himself is at no great distance."—And putting his nose below the bed;—"Fogh (says he) I smell him;—he stinks like a fox. The surest method of finding a Capuchin, is by the nose; you may wind him a mile off."—Then lowering their lanthorn, they beheld the unfortunate lover squeezed in betwixt the bed and the ground, and almost stifled.—"*Ecco lo*, (said Pasqual) here he is, with all the ensigns of his holiness;" and pulling them out one by one,—the crucifix, the rosary, and the cord of discipline,—"You may see (said he) that the reverend father came here to do penance:"—and taking up the cord,—"Suppose now we should assist him in this meritorious work. *Andiamo, Signor Padre,—andiamo.*—We will save you the trouble of inflicting it yourself;—and whether you came here to sin, or to repent, by your own maxims, you know, a little sound discipline is healthful to the soul."—The guard were lying round the bed in convulsions of laughter; and began breaking the most galling and most insolent jokes upon the supposed padre.—The lifeguardman thought himself enchanted—He at last ventured to speak, and declared they were all in a mistake:—that he was no Capuchin:—upon which the laugh redoubled, and the coarsest jokes were repeated. The lady, in the mean time, with the best dissembled marks of fear and astonishment, ran about the room, exclaiming—"*Oime Siamo perduti,—Siamo incantati,—Siamo insorcelati.*"—Pasqual, delighted to see that his plan had taken its full

effect, thought it now time to make his retreat before the unfortunate lover could have an opportunity of examining his clothes, and perhaps detecting him: he therefore pretended regimental business, and regretting much that he was obliged to join his corps, took leave of the officer and his guard; at the same time recommending by all means to treat the holy father with all that reverence and respect that was due to so sacred a person.

The lifeguard-man, when he got out from below the bed, began to look about for his clothes; but observing nothing but the greasy weeds of a Capuchin friar, he was now perfectly convinced, that Heaven had delivered him over, for his offences, to the power of some demon; (for of all mortals the Neapolitan soldiers are the most superstitious).—The lady, too, acted her part so well, that he had no longer any doubt of it.—"Thus it is (said he in a penitential voice) to offend heaven! —I own my sin.—I knew it was Friday, and yet—O, flesh, flesh!—Had it been any other day, I still should have remained what I was.——O, St Gennaro! I passed thee * too without paying the due respect:——thy all-seeing eye has found me out. Gentlemen, do with me what you please: I am not what I seem to be." ——"No, no, (said the officer) we are sensible of that.——But come, Signor Padre, on with your garments, and march;—we have no time to trifle.—— Here, corporal—(giving him the cordon) tie his hands, and let him feel the weight of St Francis.—The saint owes him that, for having so impudently denied him for his master."—The poor soldier was perfectly passive; ——they arrayed him in the sandals, the cowl, and the

* A celebrated statue of St Januarius, betwixt Portici and Naples.

cloak of Fra Pasqual, and put the great rosary about his neck; and a most woeful figure he made.—The officer made him look in the glass, to try if he could recollect himself, and asked if he was a Capuchin now or not.—He was shocked at his own appearance; but bore every thing with meekness and resignation. They then conducted him to the guard, belabouring him all the way with the cord of St Francis, and asking him every stroke, if he knew his master now.

In the mean time, Pasqual was snug in his convent, enjoying the sweets of his adventure. He had a spare cloak and cowl, and was soon equipped again like one of the holy fathers: he then took the clothes and accoutrements of the lifeguard-man, and laid them in a heap, near the gate of another convent of Capuchins, but at a great distance from his own, reserving only to himself a trifle of money which he found in the breeches pocket, just to indemnify him for the loss of his cloak and his cowl: and even this, he says, he should have held sacred, but he knew whoever should find the clothes would make lawful prize of it.

The poor soldier remained next day a spectacle of ridicule to all the world; at last his companions heard of his strange metamorphosis, and came in troops to see him; their jokes were perhaps still more galling than those of the guard, but as he thought himself under the finger of God, or at least of St Januarius, he bore all with meekness and patience; at last his clothes were found, and he was set at liberty; but he believes to this day, that the whole was the work of the devil, sent to chastise him for his sins; and has never since seen his mistress on a Friday, nor passed the statue of St Januarius without muttering a prayer. Fra Pasqual has told the story to several of his most intimate friends.

whom he can depend on, amongst whom is the Abbé T-t-i, who has often had it from his own mouth.

I beg pardon for this long story; had I suspected that it would have run out to half this length, I assure you I should not have troubled you with it. Perhaps, however, you will think this apology precisely the most unnecessary, and most impertinent part of it all.—This is often the fate of apologies, particularly for long letters; First, because it always makes them longer;—Secondly,—Hey-day! where are we going now?—To return then to our subject. We had no sooner left the Capuchin convent, than our carriage broke down, long before we reached the city: and as walking (at Palermo as well as Naples) is of all things the most disgraceful, we risked by this unfortunate accident to have our characters blasted for ever. However, Philip, our Sicilian servant, took care to make such a noise about it, that our dignity did not much suffer. He kept a little distance before us, posting and blasting all the way at their cursed crazy carriages;—and swearing that there never was any thing in the world so infamous; that in a city like Palermo, the capital of all Sicily, Signori of our rank and dignity should be obliged to walk on foot; that it must be an eternal reflection against the place,—and bawled out to every person he met, if there was no coaches to be had; no carriages of any kind, either for love or money. In short, we had not got half through the street before we had several offers from gentlemen of our acquaintance, who lamented exceedingly the indignity we had suffered, and wondered much, that we did not rather send forward a servant for another coach, and wait (in the heat of the sun) till it arrived.

This is not the only time that Philip's wits have

been of service to us on such occasions. A few nights ago we had a dispute with our coachman; turned him off, and had not provided another. We were unfortunately engaged to go to the great conversation. What was to be done?—No such thing as walking.—Should we be caught in the fact, we are disgraced for ever.—It would be worse than to be caught in that of adultery. —No alternative, however. There was not a coach to be had, and our old coachman would not serve us for one night only.—Philip made sad wry faces, and swore the coachman ought to be crucified;—but when he saw us bent on walking, he was still more distressed; and I really believe, if we had been discovered, that he would not have served us any longer. He therefore set his wits to work, how he should preserve both his masters' honour and his own place. He at first hesitated, before he would take up the flambeau; but he would by no means be prevailed on to light it.— "What, (said Philip), do you think I have no more regard for you, than to expose you to the eyes of the whole world? No, no, Gentlemen; if you will bring yourselves to disgrace, you shall not at least make me the agent of shewing it: but remember, if you are observed walking, no mortal will believe you keep a coach; and do not expect after that to be received into company?"—"Well, well, Philip, do as you please, but we must go to the conversation."—Philip shrugged up his shoulders—"*Diabolo—che faremo! Andiamo dunque Signori—andiamo.*"—So saying, he led the way, and we followed.

Philip had studied the geography of the town; he conducted us through lanes only known to himself, and carefully avoided the great street; till at last we arrived at a little entry, which leads to the conversation rooms; here the carriages usually stop. We slipt up the entry

in the dark; when Philip darting into a shop, lighted his flambeau in an instant, and came rushing before us, bawling out,—"*Piazza per gli Signori sorrestieri*;—when all the world immediately made way for us.—After we had got into the rooms, he called so loud after us, asking at what time he should order the coach to return, that, overcome partly by risibility, and partly by a consciousness of the deceit, not one of us had power to answer him. Philip, however, followed us, and repeated the question so often, that we were obliged to give him a reply, "*a mezza notte.*"—At midnight he came to tell us that the coach was ready.—We were curious to see how he would behave on this occasion; for it was not half so difficult to get in unobserved, as to get out: however, Philip's genius was equal to both.—As soon as we got into the entry, he run to the door, bawling out Antonio, as hard as he could roar. No Antonio answered;—and unfortunately, there was a number of gentlemen and ladies going away at the same time. They begged of us, as strangers, to step first into our carriage, and absolutely refused to go before us.—Philip was sadly puzzled.—He first ran up the street, then he ran down, and came back all out of breath, cursing Antonio. "That rascal (said he) is never in the way, and you must turn him off.—He pretends that he could not get up his coach to the door, for the great crowd of carriages; and is waiting about fifty yards below.—Vostri Eccellenzi had better step down (said Philip) otherwise you will be obliged to wait here at least half an hour."—We took leave of the company, and set off.—Philip ran like a lamp-lighter, till he had almost passed the carriages, when dashing his flambeau on the ground, as if by accident, he extinguished it, and getting into a

narrow lane, he waited till we came up; when he whispered us to follow him,—and conducted us back, by the same labyrinth we had come; and thus saved us from eternal infamy.—However, he assures us, that he will not venture it again for his place.

Now, what do you think of a nation where such prejudices as these prevail?—It is pretty much the case all over Italy.—An Italian nobleman is ashamed of nothing so much as making use of his legs.—They think their dignity augments by the repose of their members; and that no man can be truly respectable, that does not loll away one half of his time on a sofa, or in a carriage.—In short, a man is obliged to be indolent and effeminate, not to be despised and ridiculous.—What can we expect of such a people?—Can they be capable of any thing great or manly, who seem almost ashamed to appear men!—I own, it surpasses my comprehension; and I bless my stars every time I think of honest John Bull, even with all his faults.—Will you believe me, that, of all that I have known in Italy, there are scarce half a dozen that have had fortitude enough to subdue this most contemptible of all human prejudices? The prince of Campo Franco too in this place, is above it. He is a noble fellow, and both in his person and character, greatly resembles our late worthy friend, General Craufurd. He is a major-general too, and always dresses in his uniform, which still increases the resemblance. Every time I see him, he says or does something that recalls strongly to mind the idea of our noble general. —He laughs at the follies of his country, and holds these wretched prejudices in that contempt they deserve.—"What would the old hardy Romans think (said he, talking on this subject) were they permitted

to take a view of the occupations of their progeny ?—I should like to see a Brutus or a Cassius amongst us for a little :—how the clumsy vulgar fellows would be hooted.—I dare say they would soon be glad to return to the shades again."

Adieu ;—for some nights past we have been observing the course of a comet ; and as we were the first people here that took notice of it, I assure you, we are looked upon as very profound astronomers. I shall say more of it next letter. We have now got out of our abominable inn, and have taken a final leave of our French landlady. The Count Bushemi, a very amiable young man, has been kind enough to provide us a lodging on the sea-shore ; one of the coolest and most agreeable in Palermo. Ever yours, &c.

LETTER XXVI.

Palermo, July 2.

OUR comet is now gone ; we first observed it on the 24th. It had no tail, but was surrounded with a faintish ill-defined light, that made it look like a bright star shining through a thin cloud. This, in all probability, is owing to an atmosphere, around the body of the comet, that causes a refraction of the rays, and prevents them from reaching us with that distinctness we observe in bodies that have no atmosphere.—We were still the more persuaded of this two nights ago, when we had the good fortune to catch the comet just passing close by a small fixed star, whose light was not only considerably dimned, but we thought we observed a sensible change of place in the star, as soon

as its rays fell into the atmosphere of the comet; owing no doubt to the refraction in passing through that atmosphere.—We attempted to trace the line of the comet's course, but as we could find no globe, it was not possible to do it with any degree of precision.—Its direction was almost due north, and its velocity altogether amazing.—We did not observe it so minutely the two or three first nights of its appearance, but on the 30th it was at our zenith here, (latitude 38 10; longitude from London 18) about five minutes after midnight; and last night, the first of July, it passed four degrees to the east of the polar star, nearly at 40 minutes after eight. So that, in less than 24 hours, it has described a great arch in the heavens, upwards of 50 degrees; which gives an idea of the most amazing velocity. Supposing it at the distance of the sun, at this rate of travelling, it would go round the earth's orbit in less than a week: which makes, I think, considerably more than 60 millions of miles a-day; a motion that vastly surpasses all human comprehension. And as this motion continues to be greatly accelerated, what must it be, when the comet approaches still nearer to the body of the sun! Last night a change of place was observable in the space of a few minutes, particularly when it passed near any of the fixed stars. We attempted to find if it had any observable parallax, but the vast rapidity of its motion always prevented us; for whatever fixed stars it was near in the horizon, it had got so far to the north of them, long before it reached the meridian, that the parallax, if there was any, entirely escaped us.

I shall long much to see the observations that have been made with you, and in other distant countries on this comet; as from these, we shall probably be en-

abled to form some judgment of its distance from the earth: which, although we could observe no parallax, I am apt to believe was not very great, as its motion was so very perceptible.—We could procure no instruments to measure its apparent distance from any of the fixed stars, so that the only two observations any thing can be made of, are, the time of its passing the polar star last night, its distance from it, and the time of its arrival at our zenith on the 30th; this we found by applying the eye to a strait rod, hung perpendicularly from a small thread. The comet was not in the exact point of the zenith, but to the best of our observation, about six or seven minutes to the north of it. Last night it was visible almost immediately after sunset; long before any of the fixed stars appeared. It is now immersed in the rays of the sun, and has certainly got very near his body. If it returns again to the regions of space, it will probably be visible in a few days, but I own I should much doubt of any such return, if it is really by the attractive force of the sun that it is at present carried with such amazing celerity towards him. This is the third comet of this kind, whose return I have had an opportunity of watching; but never was fortunate enough to find any of them after they had passed the sun; though those that do really return, appear at that time much more luminous than before they approached him.

The astronomy of comets, from what I can remember of it, appears to be clogged with very great difficulties, and even some seeming absurdities. It is difficult to conceive, that these immense bodies, after being drawn to the sun with the velocity of a million of miles in an hour; when they have at last come almost to touch him, should then fly off from his body, with the same velocity they approach it; and that too, by the power of this

very motion that his attraction has occasioned.—The demonstration of this I remember is very curious and ingenious; but I wish it may be entirely free from sophistry. No doubt, in bodies moving in curves round a fixed centre, as the centripetal motion increases, the centrifugal one increases likewise;—but how this motion, which is only generated by the former, should at last get the better of the power that produces it; and that too, at the very time this power has acquired its utmost force and energy, seems somewhat difficult to conceive. It is the only instance I know, wherein the effect increasing regularly with the cause, at last, whilst the cause is still acting with full vigour, the effect entirely gets the better of the cause, and leaves it in the lurch. For, the body attracted, is at last carried away with infinite velocity from the attracting body.—By what power is it carried away?—Why, say our philosophers, by the very power of this attraction, which has now produced a new power superior to itself, to wit, the centrifugal force. However, perhaps all this may be reconcileable to reason; far be it from me to presume attacking so glorious a system as that of attraction. The law that the heavenly bodies are said to observe, in describing equal areas in equal times, is supposed to be demonstrated, and by this it would appear, that the centripetal and centrifugal forces alternately get the mastery of one another.

However, I cannot help thinking it somewhat hard to conceive, that gravity should always get the better of the centrifugal force, at the very time that its action is the smallest, when the comet is at its greatest distance from the sun; and that the centrifugal force should get the better of gravity, at the very time that its action is the greatest, when the comet is at its nearest point to the sun.

To a common observer it would rather appear, that the sun, like an electric body, after it had once charged the objects that it attracted with its own effluvia or atmosphere, by degrees loses its attraction, and at last even repels them: and, that the attracting power, like what we likewise observed in electricity, does not return again till the effluvia imbibed from the attracting body is dispelled or dissipated; when it is again attracted, and so on alternately. For it appears (at least to an unphilosophical observer) somewhat repugnant to reason, to say that a body flying off from another body some thousands of miles in a minute, should all the time be violently attracted by that body, and that it is even by virtue of this very attraction that it is flying off from it.—He would probably ask, what more could it do, pray, were it really to be repelled?

Had the system of electricity, and of repulsion as well as attraction, been known and established in the last age, I have little doubt that the profound genius of Newton would have called it to his aid; and perhaps accounted in a more satisfactory manner for many of the great phenomena of the heavens. To the best of my remembrance, we know of no body that possesses, in any considerable degree, the power of attraction, that in certain circumstances does not likewise possess the power of repulsion.—The magnet, the tourmalin, amber, glass, and every electrical substance.—Now, from analogy, as we find the sun so powerfully endowed with attraction, why may we not likewise suppose him to be possessed of repulsion? Indeed, this very power seems to be confessed by the Newtonians to reside in the sun in a most wonderful degree; for they assure us he repels the rays of light with such amazing force, that they fly upwards of 80 millions of miles in seven minutes.

Now why should we confine this repulsion to the rays of light only?—As they are material, may not other matter brought near his body, be affected in the same manner? Indeed one would imagine, that their motion alone would create the most violent repulsion; and that the force, with which they are perpetually flowing from the sun, would most effectually prevent every other body from approaching him; for this we find is the constant effect of a rapid stream of any other matter.—But let us examine a little more his effects on comets. The tails of these bodies are probably their atmospheres, rendered highly electrical, either from the violence of their motion, or from their proximity to the sun.—Of all the bodies we know, there is none in so constant and so violent an electrical state, as the higher regions of our own atmosphere. Of this I have long been convinced; for, send up a kite with a small wire about its string, only to the height of 12 or 1300 feet, and at all times it will produce fire, as I have found by frequent experience; sometimes, when the air was perfectly clear, without a cloud in the hemisphere; at other times, when it was thick and hazy, and totally unfit for electrical operations below. Now, as this is the case at so small a height, and as we find the effect still grows stronger, in proportion as the kite advances, (for I have sometimes observed, that a blast of wind, suddenly raising the kite about an hundred feet, has more than double the effect) what must it be in very great elevations?—Indeed we may often judge of it from the violence with which the clouds are agitated, from the meteors formed above the region of the clouds, and particularly from the aurora borealis, which has been observed to have much the same colour and appearance as the matter that forms the tails of comets.

Now what must be the effect of so vast a body as our atmosphere, made strongly electrical, when it happens to approach any other body?—It must always be either violently attracted or repelled, according to the positive or negative quality (in the language of electricians) of the body that it approaches.

It has ever been observed that the tails of comets (just as we should expect, from a very light fluid body, attached to a solid heavy one) are drawn after the comets, as long as they are at a distance from the sun; but so soon as the comet goes near to his body, the tail veers about to that side of the comet that is in the opposite direction from the sun, and no longer follows the comet, but continues its motion sideways, opposing its whole length to the medium through which it passes, rather than allow it in any degree to approach the sun. Indeed, its tendency to follow the body of the comet is still observable, were it not prevented by some force superior to that tendency; for the tail is always observed to bend a little to that side from whence the comet is flying. This, perhaps, is some proof too, that it does not move in an absolute vacuum.

When the comet reaches its perihelion, the tail is generally very much lengthened, perhaps by the rarefraction from the heat;—perhaps by the increase of the sun's repulsion, or that of his atmosphere. It still continues projected, exactly in the opposite direction from the sun; and when the comet moves off again to the regions of space, the tail, instead of following it, as it did on its approach, is projected a vast way before it, and still keeps the body of the comet exactly opposed betwixt it and the sun: till by degrees, as the distance increases, the length of the tail is diminished; the repulsion probably becoming weaker and weaker.

It has likewise been observed, that the length of these tails are commonly in proportion to the proximity of the comet to the sun. That of 1680 threw out a train that would almost have reached from the sun to the earth. If this had been attracted by the sun, would it not have fallen upon his body? when the comet at that time was not one-fourth of his diameter distant from him; but instead of this, it was darted away to the opposite side of the heavens, even with a greater velocity than that of the comet itself.—Now what can this be owing to, if not to a repulsive power in the sun, or his atmosphere?

And, indeed, it would at first appear but little less absurd to say, that the tail of the comet is all this time violently attracted by the sun, although it be driven away in an opposite direction from him, as to say the same of the comet itself. It is true, this repulsion seems to begin much sooner to affect the tail than the body of the comet; which is supposed always to pass the sun before it begins to fly away from him, which is by no means the case with the tail. The repulsive force, therefore, (if there is any such), is in a much less proportion than the attractive one, and probably just enough to counterbalance the latter, when these bodies are in their perihelions, and to turn them so much aside, as to prevent their falling into the body of the sun. The projectile force they have acquired will then carry them out to the heavens, and repulsion probably diminishing as they recede from the sun's atmosphere, his attraction will again take place, and retard their motion regularly, till they arrive at their aphelia, when they once more begin to return to him.

I don't know how you will like all this:—Our comet has led me a dance I very little thought of; and I be-

lieve I should have done better to send it at once into the sun, and had done with it: and that, indeed, I am apt to believe, will be its fate. For as this comet has no tail, there is, of consequence, no apparent repulsion. If it was repelled, its atmosphere, like the others, would be driven away in the opposite direction from the sun; I therefore do not see any possible method it has of escaping.

These comets are certainly bodies of a very different nature from those with tails, to which, indeed, they appear to bear a much less resemblance than they do to planets: and it is no small proof of the little progress we have made in the knowledge of the universe, that they have not as yet been distinguished by a different name.

This is the third kind of body that has been discovered in our system, that all appear essentially different from each other, that are probably regulated by different laws, and intended for very different purposes.—How much will posterity be astonished at our ignorance, and wonder that this system should have existed for so many thousand years, before we were in the least acquainted with one-half of it, or had even invented names to distinguish its different members!

I have no doubt, that in future ages, the number of the comets, the form of their orbits, and time of their revolutions, will be as clearly demonstrated as that of the planets. It is our countryman, Dr Halley, who has begun this great work, which may be considered just now as in its earliest infancy.—These bodies too, with thick atmospheres, but without tails, will likewise have their proper places ascertained, and will no longer be confounded with bodies to which they bear no resemblance or connection.

Comets with tails have seldom been visible, but on their recess from the sun. It is he that kindles them up, and gives them that alarming appearance in the heavens.—On the contrary, those without tails have seldom, perhaps never, been observed, but on their approach to him. I don't recollect any whose return has been tolerably well ascertained. I remember, indeed, a few years ago, a small one, that was said to have been discovered by a telescope, after it had passed the sun, but never more became visible to the naked eye. This assertion is easily made, and nobody can contradict it; but it does not at all appear probable, that it should have been so much less luminous after it had passed the sun, than before it approached him; and I will own to you, when I have heard that the return of these comets had escaped the eyes of the most acute astronomers, I have been tempted to think that they did not return at all, but were absorbed in the body of the sun, which their violent motion towards him seemed to indicate.—Indeed, I have often wished that this discovery might be made, as it would in some measure account for what has yet been looked upon as unaccountable: that the sun, notwithstanding his daily waste, from enlightening the universe, never appears diminished either in size or light.—Surely this waste must be immense, and were there not in nature some hidden provision for supplying it, in the space of six thousand years, supposing the world to be no older, the planets must have got to a much greater distance from his body, by the vast diminution of his attraction; they must likewise have moved much slower, and consequently the length of our year must have been greatly increased. Nothing of all this seems to be the case: the diameter of the sun is the same that ever it was:

he neither appears diminished, nor our distance from him increased: his light, heat, and attraction seem to be the same as ever; and the motion of the planets round him is performed in the same time; of consequence, his quantity of matter still continues the same. —How then is the vast waste supplied?—May there not be millions of bodies attracted by him, from the boundless regions of space, that are never perceived by us? Comets, on their road to him, have several times been accidentally discovered by telescopes, that were never seen by the naked eye.—Indeed, the number of black spots on the sun seem to indicate that there is always a quantity of matter there, only in a preparation to give light, but not yet refined and pure enough to throw off rays like the rest of his body. For I think we can hardly conceive, that any matter can remain long on the body of the sun without becoming luminous; and so we find these spots often disappear, that is to say, the matter of which they are composed is then perfectly melted, and has acquired the same degree of heat and light as the rest of his body.—Even in our glass-houses, and other very hot furnaces, most sorts of matter very soon acquire the same colour and appearance as the matter in fusion, and emit rays of light like it. But how much more must this be the case at the surface of the sun! when Newton computes that even at many thousand miles distance from it, a body would acquire a degree of heat two thousand times greater than that of red-hot iron. It has generally been understood, that he said the great comet really did acquire this degree of heat; but this is certainly a mistake: Sir Isaac's expression, to the best of my remembrance, is, that it might have acquired it. And if we consider the very great size of that body,

and the short time of its perihelion, the thing will appear impossible; nor indeed do I think we can conceive, that a body only as large as our Earth, and the spots on the sun are often much larger, could be reduced to fusion, even on this surface, but after a very considerable space of time.

Now, as it seems to be universally supposed, that the rays of light are really particles of matter, proceeding from the body of the sun, I think it is absolutely necessary that we should fall upon some such method of sending him back a supply of those rays, otherwise, let his stock be ever so great, it must at last be exhausted.

I wish astronomers would observe whether the spots on the sun are not increased after the appearing of these comets; and whether these spots do not disappear again by degrees, like a body that is gradually melted down in a furnace. But there is another consideration too, which naturally occurs: pray what becomes of all this vast quantity of matter after it is reduced to light?—Is it ever collected again into solid bodies; or is it for ever lost and dissipated, after it has made its journey from the sun to the object it illuminates?—It is somewhat strange, that of all that immense quantity of matter poured down on us during the day, that pervades and fills the whole universe, the moment we are deprived of the luminous body, the whole of it, in an instant, seems to be annihilated;—in short, there are a number of difficulties attending the common received doctrine of light; nor do I think there is any point in natural philosophy the solution of which is less satisfactory. If we suppose every ray to be a stream of particles of matter, darting from the luminous body, how can we conceive that these streams

may be intersected and pierced by other streams of the same matter ten thousand thousand different ways, without causing the least confusion either to the one or the other? for in a clear night we see distinctly any particular star that we look at, although the rays coming from that star to our eye is pierced for millions of miles before it reaches us, by millions of streams of the same rays from every other sun and star in the universe. Now suppose, in any other matter that we know of, and one would imagine there ought at least to be some sort of analogy; suppose, I say, we should only attempt to make two streams pass one another; water, for instance, or air, one of the purest and the most fluid substances we are acquainted with, we find it totally impossible.—The two streams will mutually interrupt and incommode one another, and the strongest will ever carry off the weakest into its own direction; but if a stream of light is hit by ten thousand other streams, moving at the rate of ten millions of miles in a minute, it is not even bent by the impression, nor in the smallest degree diverted from its course; but reaches us with the same precision and regularity, as if nothing had interfered with it. Besides, on the supposition that light is real particles of matter moving from the sun to the earth, in the space of seven minutes, how comes it to pass, that with all this wonderful velocity, there seems to be no momentum! for it communicates motion to no body that obstructs its passage, and no body whatever is removed by the percussion.—Supposing we had never heard of this discovery, and were at once to be told of a current of matter flying at the rate of ten millions of miles in a minute, and so large as to cover one half of our globe, would we not imagine that the earth must instantly be torn to pieces

by it, or carried off with the most incredible velocity? It will be objected, that the extreme minuteness of the particles of light prevents it from having any such effect;—but as these particles are in such quantity, and so close to each other as to cover the surface of every body that is opposed to them, and entirely to fill up that vast space betwixt the earth and the sun, this objection I should think in a great measure falls to the ground. The particles of air and of water are likewise extremely minute, and a small quantity of these will produce little or no effect, but increase their number, and only give them the millionth part of the velocity that is ascribed to a ray of light, and no force whatever could be able to withstand them.

Adieu.—I have unwarily run myself into the very deeps of philosophy; and find it rather difficult to struggle out again.—I ask your pardon, and promise, if possible, for the future, to steer quite clear of them. —I am sure, whatever this comet may be to the universe, it has been an ignis fatuus to me; for it has led me strangely out of my road, and bewildered me amongst rocks and quicksands, where I was like to stick fifty times.

I have forgot whether or not you are a rigid Newtonian; if you are, I believe I had better recant in time, for fear of accidents. I know this is a very tender point; and have seen many of those gentlemen, who are good Christians too, that can bear with much more temper to hear the divinity of our Saviour called in question, than that of Sir Isaac; and look on a Cartesian or a Ptolomæan as a worse species of infidel than an atheist.

I remember, when I was at college, to have seen a heretic to their doctrine of gravity very suddenly con-

verted by being tossed in a blanket; and another, who denied the law of centripetal and centrifugal forces, soon brought to assent, from having the demonstration made upon his shoulders, by a stone whirled at the end of a string.

These are powerful arguments, and it is difficult to withstand them.—I cry you mercy.—I am without reach of you at present, and you are heartily welcome to wreck your vengeance on my letter.

LETTER XXVII.

Palermo, July 6.

MANY of the churches here are extremely rich and magnificent. The cathedral (or, as they call it, *Madre Chiesa*) is a venerable Gothic building, and of a large size, it is supported within by eighty columns of oriental granite, and divided into a great number of chapels, some of which are extremely rich, particularly that of St Rosolia, the patroness of Palermo, who is held in greater veneration here, than all the persons of the Trinity, and, which is still more, than even the virgin Mary herself. The relics of the saint are preserved in a large box of silver, curiously wrought, and enriched with precious stones. They perform many miracles, and are looked upon as the greatest treasure of the city. They are esteemed the most effectual remedy against a plague, and have often preserved them from that fatal distemper. The saint gained so much credit, in saving them from the last plague of Messina, although it was at two hundred

miles distance, that they have, out of gratitude, erected a noble monument to her.——St Agatha did as much for Catania, but that city has not been so generous to her.—The other riches of this church consist principally in some bones of St Peter, and a whole arm of St John the Baptist.—There is likewise a jaw-bone of prodigious efficacy; and some other bones of lesser note.—It contains some things of smaller consequence, which, however, are not altogether without their merit. The monuments of their Norman kings, several of whom lie buried here, are of the finest porphyry, some of them near seven hundred years old, and yet of very tolerable workmanship. Opposite to these, there is a tabernacle of lapis lazuli. It is about fifteen feet high, and finely ornamented. Some of the presents made to St Rosolia are by no means contemptible. A cross of very large brilliants, from the king of Spain, is, I think, the most considerable.

The Sachristie too is very rich: there are some robes embroidered with oriental pearl, that are near four hundred years old, and yet look as fresh as if done yesterday.

The Jesuits' church is equal in magnificence to any thing I have seen in Italy.—The genius of those fathers appears strong in all their works; one is never at a loss to find them out. They have been grossly calumniated; for they certainly had less hypocrisy than any other order of monks.

The Chiesa del Pallezzo is entirely incrusted over with ancient mosaic; and the vaulted roof too is all of the same.—But it is endless to talk of churches. Here are upwards of three hundred.—That of Monreale, about five miles distant from this city, is the next in dignity in the island, after the cathedral of Palermo.

It is nearly of the same size, and the whole is incrusted with mosaic, at an incredible expence. Here are likewise several porphyry and marble monuments of the first kings of Sicily. This cathedral was built by king William the Good, whose memory is still held in great veneration amongst the Sicilians.

The archbishop of Monreale is already looked upon as a saint, and indeed he deserves beatification better, I believe, than most of those in the calendar. His income is very great, of which he reserves to himself just as much as procures himself clothes, and the simplest kind of food; all the rest he devotes to charitable, pious, and public uses. He even seems to carry this too far, and denies himself the most common gratifications of life: Such as sleeping on a bed; a piece of luxury he is said never to indulge himself in, but lies every night on straw.—He is, as you may believe, adored by the people, who crowd in his way as he passes to receive his benediction; which they allege is even of more sovereign efficacy than that of the pope. And indeed so it is, for he never sees an object in distress, but he is sure to relieve him; not trusting alone to the spiritual efficacy of the blessing, but always accompanying it with something solid and temporal; and, perhaps, this accompaniment is not esteemed the worst part of it. The town and country round Monreale are greatly indebted to his liberality; and in every corner exhibits marks of his munificence. He has just now made a present to the cathedral of a magnificent altar; only about one half of which is finished. It is of massive silver, exquisitely wrought, representing in high relief, some of the principal stories in the Bible, and, I think, will be one of the finest in the world.—But what is of much greater utility, he has at

his own expence made a noble walk the whole way from the city to Monreale, which was formerly of very difficult access, as it stands near the top of a pretty high mountain. The walk is cut with a great deal of judgment on the side of this mountain, and winds by easy zigzags to the top of it. It is adorned with several elegant fountains of water, and is bordered on each side with a variety of flowering shrubs.—The valley at the foot of the mountain is rich and beautiful. It appears one continued orange garden for many miles, and exhibits an elegant piece of scenery; perfuming the air at the same time with the most delicious odours.—We were so pleased with this little expedition, that notwithstanding the heat of the season, we could not keep in our carriage, but walked almost the whole of it.

The city of Palermo for these ten days past has been wholly occupied in preparing for the great feast of St Rosolia. And if the shew is in any degree adequate to the expence and trouble it costs them, it must indeed be a very noble one. They are erecting an incredible number of arches and pyramids for the illuminations. They are of wood, painted, and adorned with artificial flowers. These, they tell us, are to be entirely covered over with small lamps; so that when seen at a little distance, they appear like so many pyramids and arches of flame. The whole Marina, and the two great streets that divide the city, are to be illuminated in this magnificent manner. The number of pyramids and arches prepared for these illuminations, we are told, exceed two thousand. They are erected on each side of the street, betwixt the foot path and the pavement, and run in two right lines exactly parallel from end to end. Each of these lines is a mile in length, which makes four miles for the whole. The four gates

are the vistas to these four streets, and are to be highly decorated and illuminated. From the square in the centre of the city, the whole of this vast illumination can be seen at once; and they assure us the grandeur of it exceeds all belief.—The whole of the Marino is to be dressed out in the same manner: and for these three weeks past, they have been employed in erecting two great theatres for fire-works. One of these fronts the viceroy's palace, and is almost equal to it in size. The other is laid on piles driven in the sea, exactly opposite to the great orchestra in the centre of the Marino.—Besides these, they are building an enormous engine, which they call St Rosolia's triumphal car. From the size of it, one would imagine it were for ever to remain in the spot where it is erected; but they assure us, it is to be drawn in triumph through the city. It is indeed mounted upon wheels, but it does not appear that any force whatever can be able to turn them.

I own my curiosity increases every day to see the singular exhibition. The car is already higher than most houses in Palermo, and they are still adding to its height. But the part of the show they value themselves the most on, is the illumination of the great church; this they affirm is superior to any thing in the world; the illumination of St Peter's itself not excepted. The preparations for it are indeed amazing. These were begun about a month ago, and will not be finished till towards the last days of the feast. The whole of the cathedral, both roof and walls, is entirely covered over with mirror, intermixed with gold and silver paper, and an infinite variety of artificial flowers. All these are arranged and disposed, in my opinion, with great taste and elegance; none of them predomi-

nate, but they are intermingled every where in a just proportion.

Every altar, chapel, and column are finished in the same manner, which takes off from the littleness of the particular ornaments, and gives an air of grandeur and uniformity to the whole. The roof is hung with innumerable lustres filled with wax-candles, and, I am persuaded, when the whole is lighted up, it must be equal to any palace either in the Fairy Tales or the Arabian Nights Entertainments. Indeed it seems pretty much in the same style too, for all is gold, silver, and precious stones. The saints are dressed out in all their glory, and the fairy queen herself was never finer than is St Rosolia.—The people are lying yonder in crowds before her, praying with all their might.—I dare say, for one petition offered to God Almighty, she has at least an hundred.

We were just now remarking, with how little respect they pass the chapels dedicated to God; they hardly deign to give a little inclination of the head; but when they come near those of their favourite saints, they bow down to the very ground: Ignorance and superstition have ever been inseparable:—I believe in their hearts they think he has already reigned long enough; and would be glad to have a change in the government:—and every one of them (like the poor Welchman who thought he should be succeeded by Sir Watkin Williams) is fully persuaded, that his own favourite saint is the true heir apparent. Indeed they already give them the precedency on most occasions; not in processions and affairs of etiquette: there they think it would not be decent; but, in their more private affairs, they generally pay the compliment to the saint: ——Yet in their inscriptions on churches and chapels

(which one would think are public enough) when they are dedicated to God and any particular saint, they have often ventured to put the name of the saint first. —Sancto Januario, et Deo Opt. Max. taking every opportunity of raising their dignity, though at the expence of that of God himself.

LETTER XXVIII.

Palermo, July 7.

I HAVE been inquiring who this same St Rosolia may be who has become so very capital a personage in this part of the world; but notwithstanding their adoring her with such fervency, I have found none that can give any tolerable account of her saintship. They refer you to the most fabulous legends, that even differ widely in their accounts of her. And, after all the offerings they have made, the churches they have built, and monuments they have raised to her memory, I think it is far from being improbable, that there really never did exist such a person. I went through all the booksellers' shops, but could find nothing relative to her, except an epic poem, of which she is the heroine. It is in the Sicilian language; and is indeed one of the greatest curiosities I have met with. The poet sets her at once above all other saints except the Virgin, and it seems to be with the greatest reluctance, that he can prevail upon himself to yield the pass even to her. I find, from this curious composition, and the notes upon it, that St Rosolia was niece to King William the Good. That she began very early to display symptoms of her sanctity. That at fifteen she deserted the

world and disclaimed all human society. She retired to the mountains on the west of this city: and was never more heard of for about five hundred years. She disappeared in the year 1159. The people thought she had been taken up to heaven; till, in the year 1624, during the time of a dreadful plague, a holy man had a vision, that the saint's bones were lying in a cave near the top of the Monte Pelegrino. That if they were taken up with due reverence, and carried in procession thrice round the walls of the city, they should immediately be delivered from the plague. At first little attention was paid to the holy man, and he was looked upon as little better than a dreamer; however, he persisted in his story, grew noisy and got adherents. The magistrates, to pacify them, sent to the Monte Pelegrino; when, lo! the mighty discovery was made!—the sacred bones were found—the city was freed from the plague,—and St Rosolia became the greatest saint in the calendar.—Churches were reared, altars were dedicated, and ministers appointed to this new divinity, whose dignity and consequence have ever since been supported at an incredible expence. Now I think it is more than probable that these bones, that are now so much reverenced, and about which this great city is at present in such a bustle, belong to some poor wretch, that perhaps was murdered, or died for want in the mountains. The holy man probably could have given a very good account of them.

It is really astonishing to think, what animals superstition makes of mankind.—I dare say, the bones of St Rosolia are just as little entitled to the honours they receive, as those of poor St *Viar*, which were found somewhere in Spain under a broken tomb-stone, where these were the only legible letters. The story, I think,

is told by Dr Middleton. The priests found that the bones had an excellent knack at working miracles, and were of opinion, that this, together with the *S. Viar* on the stone, was proof sufficient of his sanctity. He continued long in high estimation, and they drew no inconsiderable revenue from his abilities; till unfortunately they petitioned the pope to grant him some immunities. The pope (Leo the Tenth, I think,) not entirely satisfied with regard to his saintship, desired to be informed of his pretensions.—A list of his miracles was sent over, accompanied by the stone with *S. Viar* upon it. The first part of the proof was sustained; but the antiquaries found the fragment to be part of the tombstone of a (Roman) *præfectus viarium*, or overseer of the high road; to whose bones they had been so much indebted; and poor St Viar, though probably an honester man than most of them, was ordered to be struck out of the Calendar.

The people of fashion here hold the superstition of the vulgar in great contempt; and perhaps that very superstition is one principal cause of their infidelity. Indeed I have ever found that deism is most prevalent in those countries where the people are the wildest and most bigotted.—A refined and cultivated understanding, shocked at their folly, thinks it cannot possibly recede too far from it, and is often tempted to fly to the very opposite extreme.—When reason is much offended by any particular dogma of faith or act of worship, she is but too apt, in the midst of her disgust, to reject the whole. The great misfortune is, that in these countries, the most violent champions for religion are commonly the most weak and ignorant:—And certainly, one weak advocate in any cause, but more particularly in a mysterious one, that requires

to be handled with delicacy and address, is capable of hurting it more, than fifty of its warmest opponents.—Silly books, that have been written by weak well-meaning men, in defence of religion, I am confident have made more infidels than all the works of Bolingbroke, Shaftesbury, or even Voltaire himself: they only want to make people believe that there are some ludicrous things to be said against it; but these grave plodding blockheads do all they can to persuade us, that there is little or nothing to be said for it.—The universal error of these gentry is, that they ever attempt to explain, and reconcile to sense and reason, those very mysteries that the first principles of our religion teach us are incomprehensible; and of consequence neither objects of sense nor reason.—I once heard an ignorant priest declare, that he did not find the least difficulty in conceiving the mystery of the Trinity, or that of the Incarnation; and that he would undertake to make them plain to the meanest capacities. A gentleman present told him, he had no doubt he could, to all such capacities as his own. The priest took it as a compliment, and made him a bow.— Now, don't you think, that a few such teachers as this must hurt religion more by their zeal, than all its opponents can by their wit? Had these heroes still kept behind the bulwarks of faith and of mystery, their adversaries never could have touched them; but they have been foolish enough to abandon these strong holds, and dared them forth to combat on the plain fields of reason and of sense.—A sad piece of generalship indeed: such defenders must ever ruin the best cause.

But although the people of education here despise the wild superstition of the vulgar, yet they go regularly to mass, and attend the ordinances with great re-

spect and decency; and they are much pleased with us for our conformity to their customs, and for not appearing openly to despise their rites and ceremonies. I own, this attention of theirs, not to offend weak minds, tends much to give us a favourable opinion both of their hearts and understandings. They don't make any boast of their infidelity; neither do they pester you with it as in France, where it is perpetually buzz'd in your ears, and where, although they pretend to believe less, they do in fact believe more than any nation on the continent.

I know of nothing that gives one a worse opinion of a man, than to see him make a shew and parade of his contempt for things held sacred: it is an open insult to the judgment of the public. A countryman of ours, about two years ago, offended egregiously in this article, and the people still speak of him both with contempt and detestation. It happened one day in the great church, during the elevation of the host, when every body else were on their knees, that he still kept standing, without any appearance of respect to the ceremony. A young nobleman that was near him expressed his surprise at this. "It is strange, Sir, (said he), that you, who have had the education of a gentleman, and ought to have the sentiments of one, should choose thus to give so very public offence."—

"Why, Sir, (said the Englishman), I don't believe in transubstantiation."—"Neither do I, Sir, (replied the other), and yet you see I kneel."

Adieu. I am called away to see the preparations for the feast. In my next I shall probably give you some account of it.

P. S. I have been watching with great care the return of our comet, but as yet I have discovered no-

thing of it: I observe too, with a very indifferent glass, several large round spots on the sun's disk, and am far from being certain that it is not one of them: but I shall not alarm you any more with this subject.

LETTER XXIX.

Palermo, July 10.

ON Sunday, the 8th, we had the long expected Sirocc wind, which, although our expectations had been raised pretty high, yet I own it greatly exceeded them. Ever since we came to our new lodging, the thermometer has stood betwixt 72 and 74; at our old one, it was often at 79 and 80; so great is the difference betwixt the heat of the city and the sea-shore. At present, our windows not only front to the north, but the sea is immediately under them, from whence we are constantly refreshed by a delightful cooling breeze. Friday and Saturday were uncommonly cool, the mercury never being higher than 72¼; and although the Sirocc is said to have set in early on Sunday morning, the air in our apartments, which are very large, with high cielings, was not in the least affected by it at eight o'clock, when I rose.—I opened the door without having any suspicion of such a change; and indeed I never was more astonished in my life.—The first blast of it on my face felt like the burning steam from the mouth of an oven. I drew back my head and shut the door, calling out to Fullarton, that the whole atmosphere was in a flame. However, we ventured to open another door that leads to a cool platform, where we usually walk; this was not exposed to

the wind; and here I found the heat much more supportable than I could have expected from the first specimen I had of it at the other door. It felt somewhat like the subterraneous sweating stoves at Naples; but still much hotter.—In a few minutes we found every fibre greatly relaxed, and the pores opened to such a degree, that we expected soon to be thrown into a profuse sweat. I went to examine the thermometer, and found the air in the room as yet so little affected, that it stood only at 78. The preceding night it was at 72½. I took it out to the open air, when it immediately rose to 110, and soon after to 112; and I am confident, that in our old lodgings, or any where within the city, it must have risen several degrees higher. The air was thick and heavy, but the barometer was little affected; it had fallen only about a line. The sun did not once appear the whole day, otherwise I am persuaded the heat must have been insupportable; on that side of our platform which is exposed to the wind, it was with difficulty we could bear it for a few minutes. Here I exposed a little pomatum which was melted down, as if I had laid it before the fire. I attempted to take a walk in the street, to see if any creature was stirring, but I found it too much for me, and was glad to get up stairs again.

This extraordinary heat continued till three o'clock in the afternoon, when the wind changed at once, almost to the opposite point of the compass, and all the rest of the day it blew strong from the sea. It is impossible to conceive the different feeling of the air. Indeed, the sudden change from heat to cold is almost as inconceivable as that from cold to heat. The current of this hot air had been flying for many hours from South to North; and I had no doubt that the atmosphere for many

miles round was entirely composed of it; however, the wind no sooner changed to the North, than it felt extremely cold, and we were soon obliged to put on our clothes, for till then we had been almost naked: In a short time the thermometer sunk to 62, a degree of heat that in England would be thought almost insupportable, and yet all that night we were obliged, merely from the cold, to keep up the glasses of our coach; so much were the pores opened and the fibres relaxed by these few hours of the Sirocc. Indeed, I had exposed myself a good deal to the open air, as I was determined to feel what effect it would produce on the human body. At first I thought it must have been impossible to bear it; but I soon discovered my mistake, and found, that where I was sheltered from the wind I could walk about without any great inconveniency; neither did it produce that copious sweat I expected; it occasioned indeed a violent perspiration, which was only attended with slight moisture on the skin; but I suppose, if I had put on my clothes, or taken the least exercise, it soon would have brought it on.

I own to you my curiosity with regard to the Sirocc is now thoroughly satisfied; nor do I at all wish for another visit of it during our stay in Sicily. Many of our acquaintance who had been promising us this *regalo*, as they call it, came crowding about us as soon as it was over, to know what we thought of it. They own it has been pretty violent for the time it lasted; but assure us they have felt it more so, and likewise of a much longer duration; however, it seldom lasts more than thirty-six or forty hours, so that the walls of the houses have not time to be heated throughout, otherwise they think there could be no such thing as living; however, from what I have felt of it, I believe they are mistaken.

Indeed, had I been satisfied with the first blast, (which is generally the case with them), and never more ventured out in it, I certainly should have been of their opinion. They laughed at us for exposing ourselves so long to it; and were surprised that our curiosity should lead us to make experiments at the expence of our persons. They assure us, that during the time it lasts, there is not a mortal to be seen without doors, but those whom necessity obliges. All their doors and windows are shut close, to prevent the external air from entering; and where there are no window-shutters, they hang up wet blankets on the inside of the window. The servants are constantly employed in sprinkling water through their apartments, to preserve the air in as temperate a state as possible; and this is no difficult matter here, as I am told there is not a house in the city that has not a fountain within it. By these means the people of fashion suffer very little from the Sirocc, except the first confinement to which it obliges them.

It is somewhat singular, that notwithstanding the scorching heat of the wind, it has never been known to produce any epidemical distempers, nor indeed bad consequences of any kind to the health of the people. It is true, they feel extremely weak and relaxed during the time it blows, but a few hours of the Tramontane, or North wind, which generally succeeds it, soon braces them up, and sets them to rights again. Now, in Naples and in many other places in Italy, when its violence is not to be compared to this, it is often attended with putrid disorders, and seldom fails to produce almost a general dejection of spirits. It is true, indeed, that there the Sirocc lasts for many days; nay even for weeks; so that, as its effects are different, it probably proceeds likewise from a different cause.

I have not been able to procure any good account of this very singular object in the climate of Palermo. The causes they assign for it are various, though none of them, I think, altogether satisfactory.

I have seen an old fellow here, who has written upon it. He says, it is the same wind that is so dreadful in the sandy deserts of Africa, where it sometimes proves mortal in the space of half an hour. He alleges that it is cooled by its passage over the sea, which entirely disarms it of these tremendous effects, before it reaches Sicily. But if this were true, we should expect to find it most violent on that side of the island that lies nearest to Africa, which is not the case:—though indeed it is possible, that its heat may be again increased by its passage across the island; for it has ever been found much more violent at Palermo, which is near the most northern point, than any where else in Sicily.—Indeed, I begin to be more reconciled to this reason, when I consider that this city is almost surrounded by high mountains, the ravines and valleys betwixt which are parched up and burning hot at this season. These likewise contain innumerable springs of warm water, the streams of which must tend greatly to increase the heat, and perhaps likewise to soften the air, and disarm it of its noxious qualities. It is a practice too, at this season, to burn heath and brush-wood on the mountains, which must still add to the heat of the air.

Some gentlemen who were in the country told me, that they walked out immediately after the Sirocc, and found the grass and plants that had been green the day before, were become quite brown, and crackled under their feet as if dried in an oven.

I shall add for your amusement, a journal of the wea-

ther since we came to Palermo. The barometer has continued constantly within a line or two of the same point, 29½;—and the sky has been always clear, except the day of the Sirocc and the 26th of June, when we had a pretty smart shower of rain for two hours; so that I think I have nothing farther to do, but to mark the heights of the thermometer.

		Thermom.
June	17	73½
	18	74
	19	75
	20	76
	21	75½
	22	77
	23	76½
	24	77
	25	77
	26	77½
	27	77
	28	77½
	29	77½
	30	78½
July	1	79
	2	80
	3	80½
	4 At new lodgings on the sea-side fronting the North,	74
	5	73
	6	72½
	7	72½
	8 The Sirocc wind,	112
	In the afternoon,	82
	9	79
	10	78

The more I consider the extreme violence of this heat, the more I am surprised that we were able to bear it with so little inconvenience. We did not even feel that depression of spirits that commonly attends very great heats with us.—The thermometer rose 40 degrees, or very near it; and it happens singularly enough, that before the Sirocc began, it stood just about 40 degrees above the point of congelation; so that in the morning of the 8th of July, the heat increased as much, almost instantaneously, as it generally does during the whole time that the sun moves from tropic to tropic; for the difference of 72 and 112 is the same as between the freezing point and 72; or between a cold day in winter, and a warm one in summer. Yesterday we had a great entertainment in the palace of the Prince of Partana, from the balcony of which the viceroy reviewed a regiment of Swiss, the best I have yet seen in the Neapolitan service. They are really a fine body of men, and, notwithstanding the violence of the heat, went through their motions with great spirit. They had two field-pieces on each flank, which were extremely well served; and the evolutions were performed with more precision and steadiness than one generally meets with, except in England and Germany. The grenadiers were furnished with false grenades, which produced every effect of real ones, except that of doing mischief. The throwing of these was the part of the entertainment that seemed to please the most; and the grenadiers took care to direct them so, that their effect should not be lost. When a number of them fell together amongst a thick crowd of the nobility, which was commonly the case, it afforded an entertaining scene enough, for they defended themselves with their hats, and threw them very dexterously upon

their neighbours. However, we saw no damage done, except the singeing of a few wigs and caps; for the ladies were there in as great numbers as the gentlemen.

The company at the Prince Partana's was brilliant, and the entertainment noble. It consisted principally of ices, creams, chocolate, sweetmeats, and fruit, of which there was a great variety. Not one half of the company played at cards; the rest amused themselves in conversation and walking on the terrace. We found the young prince and princess, who are very amiable, with several of their companions playing at cross-purposes, and other games of that kind. We were joyfully admitted of this cheerful little circle, where we amused ourselves very well for several hours. —I only mention this, to shew you the different system of behaviour here and in Italy, where no such familiar intercourse is allowed amongst young people before marriage. The young ladies here are easy, affable, and unaffected; and, not (as on the continent) perpetually stuck up by the sides of their mothers, who bring them into company, not for their amusement, but rather to offer them to sale; and seem mightily afraid lest every one should steal them, or that they themselves should make an elopement; which indeed I should think there was some danger of, considering the restraint under which they are kept;—for surely there is no such strong incitement to vice, as the making a punishment of virtue.

Here the mothers shew a proper confidence in their daughters, and allow their real characters to form and to ripen. In the other case they have either no character at all, or an affected one, which they take care to throw off the moment they have got a husband; when they think it impossible to recede too far from

those rigorous maxims of decorum and circumspection, the practice of which they had ever found so extremely disagreeable.

Were they allowed first to shew what they really are, I am persuaded they would not be half so bad; but their parents, by the manner they treat them, shew that they have no confidence in their principles; and seem to have adopted the ungenerous maxim of our countryman,

"That every woman is at heart a rake."

Now in countries where this maxim becomes of general belief, there is no doubt that it likewise becomes true; for the women having no longer any character to support, they will even avoid those pretences to virtue, well knowing that those pretences are only looked upon as hypocrisy and affectation. I dare say you will agree with me, that the better method to make them virtuous, is first to make them believe that we think them so; for where virtue is really esteemed, there are none that would willingly relinquish the character; but where it requires a guard, (as parson Adams says), it certainly is not worth the centinel.

Some of the families here put me in mind of my own domestic system. The prince of Resuttana, his wife and daughter, are always together; but it is because they choose to be so, and there appears the strongest affection, without the least diffidence on the one side, or restraint on the other.—The young princess Donna Rosolia is one of the most amiable young ladies I have seen; she was of our little party last night, and indeed made one of its greatest ornaments.—It would appear vain and partial after this to say, that in countenance, sentiment, and behaviour, she seems altogether English; —but it is true: and this perhaps may have contribu-

ted to advance her still higher in our esteem; for in spite of all our philosophy, these unphilosophical prejudices will still exist, and no man, I believe, has entirely divested himself of them. We had lately noble entertainment at her father's country-house, and had reason to be much pleased with the unaffected hospitality and easy politeness of the whole family This palace is reckoned the most magnificent in the neighbourhood of Palermo. It lies about six or seven miles to the west of the city, in the country called Il Colle, in the opposite direction from the Bagaria, which I have already mentioned. The viceroy and his family, with the greatest part of the nobility, were of this party, which lasted till about two in the morning. At midnight a curious set of fireworks were played off from the leads of the palace, which had a fine effect from the garden below.

Farewel.—I had no time to write yesterday, and though we did not break up till near three this morning, I have got up at eight, I was so eager to give you some account of the Sirocc wind.

We are now going to be very busy: The feast of St Rosolia begins to-morrow: and all the world are on the very tip-toe of expectation: perhaps they may be disappointed. I often wish that you were with us, particularly when we are happy: Though you know it is by no means feasts and shews that make us so. However, as this is perhaps the most remarkable one in Europe, that you may enjoy as much of it as possible, I shall sit down every night, and give you a short account of the transactions of the day. We are now going to breakfast; after which we are engaged to play at Ballon, an exercise I suppose you are well acquainted with; but as the day promises to be extreme-

ly hot, I believe I shall desert the party and go a-swimming.—But I see F. and G. have already attacked the figs and peaches, so I must appear for my interest.—Farewel.

LETTER XXX.

Palermo, July 12.

ABOUT five in the afternoon, the festival began by the triumph of St Rosolia, who was drawn with great pomp through the centre of the city, from the Marino to the Porto Nuovo. The triumphal car was preceded by a troop of horse, with trumpets and kettle-drums; and all the city officers in their gala uniforms. It is indeed a most enormous machine: it measures seventy feet long, thirty wide, and upwards of eighty high; and as it passed along, overtopped the loftiest houses of Palermo. The form of its under part is like that of the Roman galleys, but it swells as it advances in height; and the front assumes an oval shape like an amphitheatre, with seats placed in the theatrical manner. This is the great orchestra, which was filled with a numerous band of musicians placed in rows, one above the other: Over this orchestra, and a little behind it, there is a large dome, supported by six Corinthian columns, and adorned with a number of figures of saints and angels; and on the summit of the dome there is a gigantic silver statue of St Rosolia.—The whole machine is dressed out with orange-trees, flower-pots, and trees of artificial coral. The car stopped every fifty or sixty yards, when the orchestra performed a piece of music, with songs in honour of the saint.

It appeared a moving castle, and completely filled the great street from side to side. This indeed was its greatest disadvantage, for the space it had to move in was in nowise proportioned to its size, and the houses seemed to dwindle away to nothing as it passed along. This vast fabric was drawn by fifty-six huge mules, in two rows, curiously caparisoned, and mounted by twenty-eight postilions, dressed in gold and silver stuffs, with great plumes of ostrich feathers in their hats.—Every window and balcony, on both sides of the street, were full of well-dressed people, and the car was followed by many thousands of the lower sort. The triumph was finished in about three hours; and was succeeded by the beautiful illumination of the Marino.

I believe I have already mentioned, that there is a range of arches and pyramids extending from end to end of this noble walk: these are painted, and adorned with artificial flowers, and are entirely covered with lamps, placed so very thick, that at a little distance the whole appears so many pyramids and arches of flame. The whole chain of this illumination was about a mile in length, and indeed you can hardly conceive any thing more splendid. There was no break or imperfection any where; the night being so still that not a single lamp was extinguished.

Opposite to the centre of this great line of light, there was a magnificent pavilion erected for the viceroy and his company, which consisted of the whole nobility of Palermo: and on the front of this, at some little distance in the sea, stood the great fire-works, representing the front of a palace, adorned with columns, arches, trophies, and every ornament of architecture. All the chebecks, galleys, galliots, and other shipping, were ranged around this palace, and formed a kind of

amphitheatre in the sea, inclosing it in the centre.—These began to shew by a discharge of the whole of their artillery, the sound of which, re-echoed from the mountains, produced a very noble effect; they then played off a variety of water-rockets, and bombs of a curious construction, which often burst below water. This continued for half an hour, when, in an instant, the whole of the palace was beautifully illuminated. This was the signal for the shipping to cease, and appeared indeed like a piece of enchantment, as it was done altogether instantaneously, and without the appearance of any agent. At the same time the fountains that were represented in the court before the palace, began to spout up fire, and made a representation of some of the great *jet d'eaus* of Versailles and Marli. As soon as these were extinguished, the court assumed the form of a great parterre; adorned with a variety of palm-trees of fire, interspersed with orange-trees, flower-pots, vases, and other ornaments. On the extinguishing of these, the illumination of the palace was likewise extinguished; and the front of it broke out into the appearance of a variety of suns, stars, and wheels of fire, which in a short time reduced it to a perfect ruin. And when all appeared finished, there burst from the centre of the pile, a vast explosion of two thousand rockets, bombs, serpents, squibs, and devils, which seemed to fill the whole atmosphere: the fall of these made terrible havock amongst the clothes of the poor people who were not under cover, but afforded admirable entertainment to the nobility who were. During this exhibition we had a handsome entertainment of coffee, ices, and sweetmeats, with a variety of excellent wines, in the great pavilion in the centre of the Marino; this was at the expence of the

Duke of Castellano, the prætor (or mayor) of the city. The principal nobility give these entertainments by turns every night during the festival, and vie with each other in their magnificence.

As soon as the fire-works were finished, the viceroy went out to sea in a galley richly illuminated. We chose to stay on shore, to see the appearance it made at a distance. It was rowed by seventy-two oars, and indeed made one of the most beautiful objects you can imagine; flying with vast velocity over the waters, as smooth and as clear as glass, which shone round it like a flame, and reflected its splendour on all sides. The oars beat time to the French horns, clarions, and trumpets, of which there were a numerous band on the prow.

The day's entertainment was concluded by the Corso, which began exactly at midnight, and lasted till two in the morning.

The great street was illuminated in the same magnificent manner as the Marino. The arches and pyramids were erected at little distances from each other, on both sides of the street, betwixt the foot-path and the space for carriages; and when seen from either of the gates, appeared to be two continued lines of the brightest flame. Indeed, these illuminations are so very different, and so much superior, to any I have ever seen, that I find it difficult to give any tolerable idea of them.—Two lines of coaches occupied the space betwixt these two lines of illumination. They were in the greatest gala; and as they open from the middle, and let down on each side, the beauty of the ladies, the richness of their dress, and brilliance of their jewels, were displayed in the most advantageous manner.

This beautiful train moved slowly round and round

for the space of two hours; and every member of it seemed animated with a desire to please.—The company appear all joy and exultation:—Scarce two coaches passed without some mutual acknowledgment of affection or respect; and the pleasure that sparkled from every eye seemed to be reflected and communicated by a kind of sympathy through the whole.

In such an assembly, it was impossible for the heart not to dilate and expand itself;—I own mine was often so full, that I could hardly find utterance; and I have seen a tragedy with less emotion than I did this scene of joy.—I always thought these affections had been strangers to pomp and parade; but here the universal joy seemed really to spring from the heart: it brightened up every countenance, and spoke affection and friendship from every face.—No stately air,—no supercilious look;—all appeared friends and equals.—And sure I am, that the beauty of the ladies was not half so much heightened either by their dress or their jewels, as by that air of complacency and good humour with which it was animated.

We were distributed in different coaches amongst the nobility, which gave us a better opportunity of making these observations.—I will own to you, that I have never beheld a more delightful sight:—and if superstition often produces such effects, I sincerely wish we had a little more of it amongst us. I could have thrown myself down before St Rosolia, and blessed her for making so many people happy.

We retired about two o'clock; but the variety of glittering scenes and gaudy objects still vibrated before my eyes, and prevented me from sleeping; however, I am almost as much refreshed as if I had: but I really believe four more such days will be too much for any

of us. Indeed, I am sure that it is impossible to keep it up, and it must necessarily flag. I think, from what I can observe, they have already exhausted almost one half of their preparations; how they are to support the other four days, I own, I do not comprehend;—however, we shall see.

I thought to have given you an account of every thing at night, after it was over, but I find it impossible: the spirits are too much dissipated, and exhausted, and the imagination is too full of objects to be able to separate them with any degree of regularity.—I shall write you therefore regularly the morning following, when this fever of the fancy has had time to cool, and when things appear as they really are.—Adieu then till to-morrow.—Here is a fine shower, which will cool the air, and save the trouble of watering the Marino and the great street, which is done regularly every morning when there is no rain. The thermometer is at 73.

13th. I thought there would be a falling off.—Yesterday's entertainments were not so splendid as those of the day before. They began by the horse-races. There were three races, and six horses started each race. These were mounted by boys of about twelve years old, without either saddle or bridle, but only a small piece of cord, by way of bit, in the horse's mouth, which, it seems, is sufficient to stop them. The great street was the course; and to this end it was covered with earth to the depth of five or six inches.—The firing of a cannon at the Porto Felice was the signal for starting: and the horses seemed to understand this, for they all set off at once, full speed, and continued at their utmost stretch to the Porto Nuovo, which was the winning post. It is exactly a

mile, and they performed it in a minute and thirty-five seconds, which, considering the size of the horses, (scarce fourteen hands) we thought was very great. These are generally Barbs, or a mixed breed, betwixt the Sicilian and Barb. The boys were gaudily dressed, and made a pretty appearance.—We were surprised to see how well they stuck on; but indeed, I observed they had generally laid fast hold of the mane.

The moment before starting, the street appeared full of people; nor did we conceive how the race could possibly be performed. Our surprise was increased when we saw the horses rdn full speed at the very thickest of this crowd, which did not begin to open, till they were almost close upon it.—The people then opened, and fell back on each side, by a regular uniform motion, from one end of the street to the other. This singular manœuvre seemed to be performed without any bustle or confusion, and the moment the horses were past, they closed again behind them. However, it destroys great part of the pleasure of the race; for you cannot help being under apprehensions for such a number of people, whom you every moment see in imminent danger of being trod to death; for this must inevitably be their fate, were they only a second or two later in retiring. These accidents, they allow, have often happened: however, yesterday every body escaped.

The victor was conducted along the street in triumph, with his prize displayed before him. This was a piece of white silk embroidered and worked with gold.

These races, I think, are much superior to the common style of races in Italy, which are performed by horses alone without riders; but they are by no means to be compared to those in England.

The great street was illuminated in the same manner as on the preceding night; and the grand conversation of the nobles was held at the archbishop's palace, which was richly fitted up for the occasion.

The gardens were finely illuminated; and put me in mind of our Vauxhall. There were two orchestras (one at each end), and two very good bands of music. The entertainment was splendid, and the archbishop shewed attention and politeness to every person of the company.

About ten o'clock the great triumphal car marched back again in procession to the Marino. It was richly illuminated with large wax tapers, and made a most formidable figure.—Don Quixote would have been very excuseable in taking it for an enchanted castle, moving through the air.—We did not leave the archbishop's till midnight, when the Corso began, which was precisely the same in every respect as the night before, and afforded us a delightful scene.

14*th*. Last night the two great streets and the four gates of the city that terminate them, were illuminated in the most splendid manner.—These streets cross each other in the centre of the city, where they form a beautiful square, called *La Piazza Ottangolare*, from the eight angles they form. This square was richly ornamented with tapestry, statues, and artificial flowers; and as the buildings which form its four sides are uniform and of a beautiful architecture, and at the same time highly illuminated, it made a fine appearance. There are four orchestras erected in it: and the four bands of music are greater than I had any conception this city could have produced.

From the centre of this square you have a view of the whole city of Palermo thus dressed out in its glory;

and, indeed, the effect it produces surpasses belief. The four gates that form the vistas to this splendid scene are highly decorated, and lighted up in an elegant taste; the illuminations representing a variety of trophies, the arms of Spain, those of Naples, Sicily, and the city of Palermo, with their guardian geniuses, &c.

The conversation of the nobles was held in the viceroy's palace; and the entertainment was still more magnificent than any of the former. The great fireworks opposite to the front of the palace began at ten o'clock, and ended at midnight; after which we went to the Corso, which lasted as usual, till two in the morning. This part of the entertainment still pleases us the most; it is indeed the only part of it that reaches the heart; and where this is not the case, a puppet-shew is just as good as a coronation.—We have now got acquainted almost with every countenance; and from that air of goodness and benignity that animates them, and which seems to be mutually reflected from one to the other, we are inclined to form the most favourable opinion of the people.

Our fireworks last night were greater than those of the Marino, but their effect did not please me so much; the want of the sea and the shipping were two capital wants. They likewise represented the front of a palace, but of a greater extent. It was illuminated too as the former, and the whole conducted pretty much in the same manner. We saw it to the greatest advantage from the balconies of the state apartments, in the viceroy's palace, where we had an elegant concert; but, to the no small disappointment of the company, Gabrieli, the finest singer, but the most capricious mortal upon earth, did not choose to perform.

15*th*. Three races, six horses each as formerly. They called it very good sport. I cannot say that I admired it.—A poor creature was rode down, and I believe killed; and one of the boys had likewise a fall.

The great assembly of the nobility was held at the Judice Monarchia's, an officer of high trust and dignity. Here we had an entertainment in the same style as the other, and a good concert.—At eleven o'clock the viceroy, attended by the whole company, went on foot to visit the square and the great church.—We made a prodigious train; for though the city was all a lamp of light, the servants of the viceroy and nobility attended with wax flambeaux, to shew us the way. As soon as the viceroy entered the square, the four orchestras struck up a symphony, and continued playing till he left it.

The crowd around the church was very great, and without the presence of the viceroy, it would have been impossible for us to get in; but his attendants soon cleared the passage; and at once entering the great gate, we beheld the most splendid scene in the world. The whole church appeared a flame of light; which, reflected from ten thousand bright and shining furnaces, of different colours, and at different angles, produced an effect, which, I think, exceeds all the descriptions of enchantment I ever read. Indeed, I did not think that human art could have devised any thing so splendid. I believe I have already mentioned, that the whole church, walls, roof, pillars, and pilasters were entirely covered over with mirror, interspersed with gold and silver paper, artificial flowers, &c. done up with great taste and elegance, so that not one inch either of stone or plaster was to be seen.—Now, form an idea, if you can, of one of our great cathedrals dressed out in this manner, and illuminated with twenty thousand

wax tapers, and you will have some faint notion of this splendid scene. I own it did greatly exceed my expectations, although, from the descriptions we had of it, they were raised very high. When we recovered from our first surprise, which had produced, unknown to ourselves, many exclamations of astonishment, I observed that all the eyes of the nobility were fixed upon us; and that they enjoyed exceedingly the amazement into which we were thrown.—Indeed this scene, in my opinion, greatly exceeds all the rest of the shew.

I have often heard the illumination of St Peter's spoken of as a wonderful fine thing: so indeed it is; but it is certainly no more to be compared to this, than the planet Venus is to the Sun.—The effects indeed are of a different kind, and cannot well be compared together.

This scene was too glaring to bear any considerable time; and the heat occasioned by the immense number of lights, soon became intolerable.—I attempted to reckon the number of lustres, and counted upwards of five hundred; but my head became giddy, and I was obliged to give it up.—They assure us, that the number of wax tapers is not less than twenty thousand. There are eight and twenty altars, fourteen on each side; these are dressed out with the utmost magnificence; and the great altar is still the most splendid of all.

When you think of the gaudy materials that compose the lining of this church, it will be difficult to annex an idea of grandeur and majesty to it; at least, so it struck me, when I was first told of it; yet, I assure you, the elegant simplicity and unity of the design prevents this effect, and gives an air of dignity to the whole.

It is on this part of the show the people of Palermo value themselves the most; they talk of all the rest as

trifling in comparison of this; and indeed, I think it is probable, that there is nothing of the kind in the world that is equal to it.—It is strange they should choose to be at so great an expence and trouble, for a show of a few hours only; for they have already begun this morning to strip the church of its gaudy dress, and I am told it will not be finished for many weeks.

From the church we went immediately to the Corso, which concluded, as usual, the entertainments of the day.

16*th*. Last night we had the full illumination of all the streets.—The assembly was held at the prætor's, where there was an elegant entertainment and a concert.—Pacherotti, the first man of the opera, distinguished himself very much. I think he is one of the most agreeable singers I ever heard; and am persuaded, that in a few years he will be very celebrated. Campanucci, the second soprano, is, I think, preferable to most that I have heard in Italy; and you will the more easily believe this, when I inform you, that he is engaged for next winter to be the first singer in the great opera at Rome. Is it not strange, that the capital of all Italy, and, for the fine arts, (as it formerly was for arms), the capital of the world, should condescend to choose its first opera performer from amongst the subalterns of a remote Sicilian stage?

You will believe, that with two such sopranos as these, and Gabrieli for the first woman, the opera here will not be a despicable one. It is to begin in a few days, notwithstanding the extreme heat of the season; so fond are the people here of these entertainments.

Their opera dancers are those you had last year at London: they are just arrived, and the people are by no means pleased with them. We saw them this morn-

ing at the rehearsal; and, to their great surprise, addressed them in English. You cannot imagine how happy they were to see us. Poor souls! I was delighted to hear with what warmth of gratitude and affection they spoke of England. There is a mother and two daughters; the youngest pretty, but the eldest, the first dancer, appears a sensible, modest, well-behaved girl;—more so than is common with these sort of people. Speaking of England, she said, with a degree of warmth that her good treatment in general could hardly inspire, that in her life she never left any country with so sore a heart; and had she only enjoyed her health, all the world should never have torn her away from it.—She seemed affected when she said this.—I acknowledged the honour she did the English nation; but alleged that these sentiments, and the manner in which they were uttered, could scarcely proceed from a *general love* of the country.—She answered me with a smile, but at the same time I could observe the tear in her eye.—At that instant we were interrupted; however, I shall endeavour, if possible, to learn her story; for I am persuaded there is one; perhaps you may know it, as I dare say it is no secret in London.

But I have got quite away from my subject, and had forgot that I sat down to give you an account of the feast.—Indeed, I will own, it is a kind of subject I by no means like to write upon; I almost repent that I had undertaken it, and am heartily glad it is now over.—It does very well to see shows; but their description is of all things on earth the most insipid: for words and writing convey ideas only by a slow and regular kind of progress; and while we gain one, we generally lose another, so that the fancy seldom em-

braces the whole; but when a thousand objects strike you at once, the imagination is filled and satisfied.

The great procession, that closes the festival, began at ten o'clock.—It only differed from other processions in this, that besides all the priests, friars, and religious orders of the city, there were placed at equal distances from each other ten lofty machines made of wood and paste-board, ornamented in an elegant manner, representing temples, tabernacles, and a variety of beautiful pieces of architecture.—These are furnished by the different convents and religious fraternities, who vie with each other in the richness and elegance of the work. Some of them are not less than sixty feet high.—They are filled with figures of saints and of angels, made of wax, so natural and so admirably well painted, that many of them seemed really to be alive. All these figures are prepared by the nuns, and by them dressed out in rich robes of gold and silver tissue.

We were a good deal amused this morning to see them returning home in coaches to their respective nunneries.—At first we took them for ladies in their gala dress, going out to visit the churches, which we were told was the custom, and began to pull off our hats as they went past. Indeed we were led into this blunder by some of our friends, who carried us out on purpose; and as they saw the coaches approach, told us, This is the Princess of such a thing—there is the Duchess of such another thing;—and, in short, we had made half a dozen of our best bows, (to the no small entertainment of these wags), before we discovered the trick.—They now insist upon it, that we are good Catholics, for all this morning we had been bowing to saints and angels.

A great silver box, containing the bones of St Rosolia, closed the procession. It was carried by thirty-six of the most respectable burgesses of the city, who look upon this as the greatest honour. The archbishop walked behind it, giving his benediction to the people as he passed.

No sooner had the procession finished the tour of the great square, before the prætor's palace, than the fountain in the centre, one of the largest and finest in Europe, was converted into a fountain of fire; throwing it up on all sides, and making a beautiful appearance. It only lasted for a few minutes, and was extinguished by a vast explosion, which concluded the whole. As this was altogether unexpected, it produced a fine effect, and surprised the spectators more than any of the great fire works had done.

There was a mutual and friendly congratulation ran through the whole assembly, which soon after parted, and this morning every thing has once more reassumed its natural form and order;—and I assure you, we were not more happy at the opening of the festival, than we are now at its conclusion. Every body was fatigued and exhausted by the perpetual feasting, watching, and dissipation of these five days. However, upon the whole, we have been much delighted with it, and may with truth pronounce, that the entertainments of the feast of St Rosolia are much beyond those of the holy week at Rome; of the Ascension at Venice; or, indeed, any other festival we have ever been witness of.

I believe I did not tell you, that about ten or twelve days ago, as the time we had appointed for our return to Naples was elapsed, we had hired a small vessel, and provided every thing for our departure; we had taken

leave of the viceroy, and received our passports. Our baggage and sea-store was already on board, when we were set upon by our friends, and solicited with so much earnestness and cordiality, to give them another fortnight, that we found it impossible to refuse it; and in consequence discharged our vessel, and sent for our trunks.—I should not have mentioned this, were it not to shew you how much more attention is paid to strangers here than in most places on the continent.

We reckon ourselves much indebted to them for having obliged us to prolong our stay; as, independent of the amusements of the festival, we have met with so much hospitality and urbanity, that it is now with the most sincere regret we find ourselves obliged to leave them. Indeed, had we brought our clothes and books from Naples, it is hard to say how long we might have staid.

We have sent to engage a vessel, but probably shall not sail for five or six days. Adieu.

LETTER XXXI.

Palermo, July 19.

WE have now had time to inquire a little into some of the antiquities of this island, and have found several people, particularly the prince of Torremuzzo, who have made this the great object of their study. However, I find we must wade through oceans of fiction, before we can arrive at any thing certain or satisfactory.

Most of the Sicilian authors agree in deriving their origin from Ham, or, as they call him, Cham, the son

of Noah, who, they pretend, is the same with Saturn. They tell you, that he built a great city, which from him was named Camesena. There have been violent disputes about the situation of this city:—Beroso supposes it to have stood where Camarina was afterwards founded, and that this was only a corruption of its primitive name. But Guarneri, Carrera, and others, combat this opinion, and affirm, that Camesena stood near the foot of Ætna, between Aci and Catania, almost opposite to those three rocks that still bear the name of the Cyclops.—Indeed Carrera mentions an inscription that he had seen in a ruin near Aci, supposed to have been the sepulchre of Acis, which he thinks puts this matter out of doubt. These are his words: "Hæc est inscriptio vetustæ cujusdam tabellæ repertæ in pyramide sepulchri Acis, ex fragmentis vetustissima Chamesenæ, urbis hodie Acis, conditæ a Cham, gigantum principe, etiam nuncupato Saturno Chameseno, in promontorio Xiphonio, ubi adhuc hodie visuntur solo æquata antiqua vestigia, et ruinæ dictæ urbis et arcis in insula prope Scopulos Cyclopum, et retinet adhuc sincopatum nomen La Gazzena."

This same Cham, they tell you, was a very great scoundrel, and that *esenus*, which signified infamous, was added to his name, only to denote his character. Fazzelo says, he married his own sister, who was called Rhea; that Ceres was the fruit of this marriage; that she did not inherit the vices of her father, but reigned over Sicily with great wisdom and moderation; that she taught her subjects the method of making bread and wine, the materials of which their island produced spontaneously in great abundance: That her daughter Proserpine was of equal beauty and virtue with herself: That Orius, king of Epirus, had demand-

ed her in marriage, and, on a refusal, had carried her off by force; which gave occasion to the wild imagination of Greece to invent the fable of the rape of Proserpine by Pluto king of Hell, this Orius being of a morose and gloomy disposition.

Ceres has ever been the favourite deity of the Sicilians. She chose her seat of empire in the centre of the island, on the top of a high hill, called Enna, where she founded the city of that name. It is still a considerable place, and is now called Castragiovanni; but little or nothing remains of the ruins of Enna.

Cicero gives a particular account of this place. He says, from its situation in the centre of the island, it was called *Umbilicus Siciliæ*, and describes it as one of the most beautiful and fertile spots in the world. The temple of Ceres at Enna was renowned all over the heathen world, and pilgrimages were made to it, as they are at present to Loretto. Fazzello says, it was held in such veneration, that when the city was surprised and pillaged by the slaves and barbarians, they did not presume to touch this sacred temple, although it contained more riches than all the city besides.

There have been violent disputes amongst the Sicilian authors, whether Proserpine was carried off near the city of Enna, or that of Ætna, which stood at the foot of that mountain, but it is of mighty little consequence, and more respect, I think, is to be paid to the sentiments of Cicero, who gives it in favour of Enna, than the whole of them. Diodorus too is of the same opinion, and his description of this place is almost in the very words as that of Cicero. They both paint it as a perfect paradise, abounding in beautiful groves, clear springs and rivulets, and, like Ætna, covered with a variety of flowers at all seasons of the year. To

these authorities, if you please you may add that of Milton, who compares it to paradise itself:

> ——Nor that fair field
> Of Enna, where Proserpine gathering flowers,
> Herself a fairer flower, by gloomy Dis
> Was gathered——

If you want to have a fuller account of this place, you will find it in Cicero's pleadings against Verres, and in the fifth book of Diodorus.—I have conversed with several gentlemen who have been there: they assure me that it still answers in a great measure to the description of these authors.—Medals, I am told, are still found, with an elegant figure of Ceres, and an ear of wheat for the reverse; but I have not been able to procure any of them.

There was another temple in Sicily not less celebrated than this one of Ceres.—It was dedicated to Venus Erecina, and like the other too, was built on the summit of a high mountain. The ancient name of this mountain was Eryx, or as the Sicilians call it Erice, but it is now called St Juliano. Both mountain and temple are often mentioned by the Greek and Latin historians, and happily the Sicilian ones have no dispute about its situation or origin, which they make to be almost as ancient as that of Ceres.—Diodorus says, that Dedalus, after his flight from Crete, was hospitably received here, and by his wonderful skill in architecture added greatly to the beauty of this temple. He enriched it with many fine pieces of sculpture, but particularly with the figure of a ram of such exquisite workmanship that it appeared to be alive. This, I think, is likewise mentioned by Cicero.

Æneas too in his voyage from Troy to Italy landed in this part of the island, and, according to Diodorus and Thucydides, made rich presents to this temple;

but Virgil is not satisfied with this; he must raise the piety of his hero still higher, and, in opposition to all the historians, makes Æneas the founder of the temple *. Its fame and glory continued to increase for many ages; and it was still held in greater veneration of the Romans, than it had been by the Greeks. Fazzello says, and quotes the authority of Strabo, that seventeen cities of Sicily were laid under tribute to raise a sufficient revenue to support the dignity and enormous expences of this temple. Two hundred soldiers were appointed for its guard, and the number of its priests and priestesses, and ministers, male and female, were incredible.

At certain seasons of the year, great numbers of pigeons, which were supposed to be the attendants of Venus, used to pass betwixt Africa and Italy; and resting for some days on Mount Eryx, and round this temple, it was then imagined by the people that the goddess herself was there in person; and on these occasions, he says, they worshipped her with all their might.—Festivals were instituted in honour of the deity, and the most modest woman was only looked upon as a prude, that refused to comply with the rites. However, there were not many complaints of this kind; and it has been alleged, that the ladies of Eryx were sometimes looking out for the pigeons long before they arrived; and that they used to scatter peas about the temple to make them stay as long as possible.

Venus was succeeded in her possessions of Eryx by St Juliano, who now gives his name both to the city and mountain; and indeed he has a very good title,

* Tum vicina astris Erycino in vertice sede,
Fundatur Veneri Idaliæ tumuloque sacerdos,
Et lucus late sacer additur Anchisæo.

for when the place was closely besieged, the Sicilians tell you, he appeared on the walls armed cap-à-pié, and frightened the enemy to such a degree, that they instantly took to their heels, and left him ever since in quiet possession of it.—It would have been long before Venus and her pigeons could have done as much for them.

Many medals are found in the neighbourhood, but there is not the least vestige of this celebrated temple. —Some marbles with inscriptions and engravings that have been found deep below ground are almost the only remaining monuments of its existence. Suetonius says, that it had even fallen to ruins before the time of Tiberius; but as Venus was the favourite divinity of that emperor, he had ordered it to be magnificently repaired: however, it is somewhat difficult to reconcile this with Strabo's account; who tells us, that even before his time it had been totally abandoned; and indeed this seems most probable, as every vestige of it has now disappeared, which is not commonly the case with the great works of the age of Tiberius.

Æneas landed at the port of Drepanum, at the foot of this mountain. Here he lost his father Anchises; in honour of whom, on his return from Carthage about a year after, he celebrated the games that make so great a figure in the Æneid, which Virgil introduces with a good deal of address as a compliment to the piety of Augustus, who had instituted games of the same kind in honour of Julius Cæsar, his father by adoption.

It is singular, that Virgil's account of this part of Sicily should be so very different from that of Homer, when there was so short a space, only a few months, between the times that their heroes visited it. —Indeed, Virgil seems to have followed the historians,

in his conduct of this part of his poem, more than the sentiments of Homer; who makes this very country where Æneas was so hospitably received, the habitation of Polyphemus and the Cyclops, where Ulysses lost so many of his companions, and himself made so very narrow an escape. The island of Licosia where he moored his fleet, lay very near the port of Drepanum, and Homer describes the adventure of Polyphemus to have happened on the shore of Sicily, opposite to that island. Virgil has taken the liberty to change the scene of action, as he was better acquainted both with the geography and history of the country than Homer; and, perhaps with a good deal of propriety, places it at the foot of Mount Ætna. I am afraid there is not so much propriety in his changing the action itself, and contradicting the account that Homer gives of it. For Ulysses says that Polyphemus devoured four of his companions; but that he, by his address, saved all the rest, and was the last that escaped out of the cave. Now Virgil makes Ulysses to have told a lie, for he affirms that he left Achemenides behind him; and Achemenides too gives a different account of this affair from Ulysses: he assures Æneas, that Polyphemus devoured only two of his companions; after which they put out his eye *(acuto telo)* with a sharp weapon; which rather gives the idea of a spear or javelin, than that of a great beam of wood made red hot in the fire, as Homer describes it. But there are many such passages.—Don't you think they seem either to indicate a negligence in Virgil, or a want of deference for his master? neither of which, I believe, he has ever been accused of.

The Sicilian authors are by no means pleased with Virgil for making Æneas the founder of this temple of

Venus Erecina. They will only allow that the colony which he was obliged to leave there, after the burning of his ships, did, in honour of his mother Venus, build the city of Eryx around her temple; but they all insist upon it, that the temple was built by Eryx, or as they call him Erice, another son of Venus, but much older than Æneas; the same that was found to be so equal a match for Hercules, but was at last killed by him, at a boxing-match near the foot of this mountain. The spot where this is supposed to have happened, still retains the name of *(il campo di Hercole)* the field of Hercules. Through the whole fifth book of the Æneid, this Eryx is styled the brother of Æneas; and, in his account of the games, Virgil introduces those very gauntlets with which he fought with Hercules (*in hoc ipso littore*) in this very field; the sight of which, from their enormous size, astonishes the whole host, and frightens the champion Dares so much that he refuses to fight.

Adieu. The opera begins in two days; after which, I think, we shall soon take leave of Sicily.

Ever yours.

LETTER XXXII.

Palermo, July 21.

YESTERDAY we walked up to the Monte Pelegrino to pay our respects to St Rosolia, and thank her for the variety of entertainment she has afforded us. It is one of the most fatiguing expeditions I ever made in my life. The mountain is extremely

high, and uncommonly steep, that the road up to it is very properly termed *la Scala*, or the Stair: before the discovery of St Rosolia, it was looked upon as almost inaccessible, but they have now, at a vast expence, cut out a road over precipices that were almost perpendicular. We found the saint lying in her grotto, in the very same attitude in which she is said to have been discovered: her head reclining gently upon her hand, and a crucifix before her. This is a statue of the finest white marble, and of most exquisite workmanship. It is placed in the inner part of the cavern, on the very same spot where St Rosolia expired. It is the figure of a lovely young girl of about fifteen in the act of devotion. The artist has found means to throw something that is extremely touching into the countenance and air of this beautiful statue. I never in my life saw one that affected me so much, and am not surprised that it should have captivated the hearts of the people. It is covered with a robe of beaten gold, and is adorned with some valuable jewels. The cave is of a considerable extent, and extremely damp, so that the poor little saint must have had very cold uncomfortable quarters. They have built a church around it; and appointed priests to watch over these precious relics, and receive the offerings of pilgrims that visit them.

An inscription graved by the hand of St Rosolia herself, was found in a cave in Mount Quesquina, at a considerable distance from this mountain. It is said that she was disturbed in her retreat there, and had wandered from thence to Mount Pelegrino, as a more retired and inaccessible place. I shall copy it exactly, as it is preserved in the poor little saint's own Latin.

EGO ROSOLIA
SINIBALDI QUISQUI-
NE ET ROSARUM
DOMINI FILIA, AMORE
DEI MEI JESU
CHRISTI,
IN HOC
ANTRO HABITA-
RI DECREVI.

After St Rosolia was scared from the cave where this inscription was found, she was never more heard of, till her bones were found about five hundred years after, in this spot.

The prospect from the top of Mount Pelegrino is beautiful and extensive. Most of the Lipari islands are discovered in a very clear day, and likewise a large portion of Mount Ætna, although at the distance of almost the whole length of Sicily. The Bagaria too, and the Colle, covered over with a number of fine country houses and gardens, make a beautiful appearance. The city of Palermo stands within less than two miles of the foot of the mountain, and is seen to great advantage. Many people went to this mountain during the time of the great illumination; from whence they pretend it has a fine effect: but this unfortunately we neglected.

Near the middle of the mountain, and not far from its summit, there still appears some remains of a celebrated castle, the origin of which the Sicilian authors carry back to the most remote antiquity. Massa says, it is supposed to have been built by Saturn immediately after the flood; for in the time of the earliest Carthaginian wars, it was always much respected on account of its venerable antiquity.—It was then a place of strength, and is often mentioned by the Greek

historians. Diodorus says, in his twenty-third book, that Hamilcar kept possession of it for three years, against all the power of the Romans; who, with an army of forty thousand men, attempted in vain to dislodge him.

The situation of Palermo is seen, I think, to more advantage from the Monte Pelegrino than from any where else. This beautiful city stands near the extremity of a kind of natural amphitheatre, formed by high and rocky mountains; but the country that lies betwixt the city and these mountains, is one of the richest and most beautiful spots in the world. The whole appears a magnificent garden, filled with fruit trees of every species, and watered by clear fountains and rivulets, that form a variety of windings through this delightful plain. From the singularity of this situation, as well as from the richness of the soil, Palermo has had many flattering epithets bestowed upon it; particularly by the poets, who have denominated it *Conca d'oro*, The Golden Shell, which is at once expressive both of its situation and richness. It has likewise been styled *Aurea Valle*, *Hortus Siciliæ*, *&c.*; and to include all these together, the lasting term of *Felix* has been added to its name, by which you will find it distinguished in the maps.

Many of the etymologists allege, that it is from the richness of this valley that it had its original name of *Panormus*, which, in the old Greek language, they pretend, signified All a garden: but others say there is no occasion for straining significations, and assert, with more appearance of plausibility, that it was called *Panormus* from the size and conveniency of its harbours; one of which is recorded anciently to have extended to the very centre of the city. And this is the account

Diodorus gives of it: it was called Panormus, says he, because its harbour even penetrated to the very innermost parts of the city; Panormus in the Greek language signifying All a port. And Procopius, in his history of the wars of the Goths, assures us, that in the time of Belisarius, the port was deep enough for that general to run his ships up to the very walls of the city, and give the assault from them. It is not now so well entitled to this name as it was formerly. These harbours have been almost entirely destroyed and filled up; most probably I think by the violent torrents from the mountains that surround it; which are recorded sometimes to have laid waste great part of the city. Fazzello speaks of an inundation of which he was an eyewitness, that came down from the mountains with such fury, that they thought the city would have been entirely swept away. He says, it burst down the wall near to the royal palace, and bore away every thing that opposed its passage; churches, convents, houses, to the number of two thousand, and drowned upwards of three thousand people.—Now the fragments and ruins carried to the sea by such a torrent alone, would be sufficient to fill up a little harbour, so that we are not to be surprised, that these capacious ports, for which it had been so much celebrated, no longer exist.

Next to Chamefeno, Palermo is generally supposed to be the most ancient city in the island. Indeed there still remain some monuments that carry back its origin to the most remote antiquity. A bishop of Lucera has wrote on this subject. He is clearly of opinion, that Palermo was founded in the days of the first patriarchs. You will laugh at this;—so did I;—but the bishop does not go to work upon conjecture only: he supports his opinion with such proofs, as, I own to you, staggered me a good deal. A Chaldean inscrip-

tion was discovered about six hundred years ago, on a block of white marble; it was in the reign of William II. who ordered it to be translated into Latin and Italian. The bishop says, there are many fragments in Palermo with broken inscriptions in this language; and seems to think it beyond a doubt, that the city was founded by the Chaldeans, in the very early ages of the world. This is the literal translation:—"During the time that Isaac, the son of Abraham, reigned in the valley of Damascus, and Esau, the son of Isaac, in Idumea, a great multitude of Hebrews, accompanied by many of the people of Damascus, and many Phenicians, coming into this triangular island, took up their habitation in this most beautiful place, to which they gave the name of Panormus."

The bishop translates another Chaldean inscription, which is indeed a great curiosity. It is still preserved, though not with that care that so valuable a monument of antiquity deserves. It is placed over one of the old gates of the city, and when that gate falls to ruin, it will probably be for ever lost. The translation is in Latin, but I shall give it to you in English:—"There is no other God but one God. There is no other power but this same God. There is no other conqueror but this God whom we adore. The commander of this tower is Saphu, the son of Eliphar, son of Esau, brother of Jacob, son of Isaac, son of Abraham. The name of the tower is Baych, and the name of the neighbouring tower is Pharat."

These two inscriptions seem to reflect a mutual light upon each other. Fazzello has preserved them both, and remarks upon this last, that it appears evidently from it, that the tower of Baych was built antecedent to the time of Saphu, (or, as we translate it, Zephu),

who is only mentioned as commander of this tower, but not as its founder.

Part of the ruins of this tower still remain, and many more Chaldean inscriptions have been found amongst them, but so broken and mangled, that little could be made of them. Fazzello is in great indignation at some masons he found demolishing these precious relics, and complains bitterly of it to the senate, whom he with justice upbraids for their negligence and indifference.

Conversing on this subject t'other night with a gentleman who is well versed in the antiquities of this place, I took the liberty of objecting to the Greek etymology, Pan-ormus, it appearing extremely absurd to give a Greek name to the city long before the existence of the Greek nation: I added, that I was a good deal surprised Fazzello had not attempted to account for this seeming absurdity. He allowed the apparent validity of the objection, and blamed Fazzello for his negligence; but assured me, that Pan-ormus, or something very nearly of the same sound, signified in the Chaldean language, and likewise in the Hebrew, a paradise or delicious garden; and that the Greeks probably finding it so applicable, never thought of changing its name. This I was in no capacity to contradict.—He added too, that Pan-ormus was likewise an Arabic word, and signified *This water;* which probably was the reason that the Saracens did not change its name, as they have done that of almost every thing else; as this is as applicable and as expressive of the situation of Palermo, as any of the other etymologies; it being surrounded on all sides with beautiful fountains of the purest water, the natural consequence of the vicinity of the mountains.

Pray shew this letter to our friend Mr Crofts, and desire his sentiments on these etymologies and antiquities. Tell him I have not forgot his commission, and shall procure him all the oldest and most unintelligible books in Palermo; but I must beg, for the repose and tranquillity of mankind, that he will not republish them. On these conditions, I send him a most valuable fragment: it is part of a Chaldean inscription that has been exactly copied from a block of white marble found in the ruins of the tower Baych.—I own I should like much to see it translated; the people here have as yet made nothing of it; and we were in no capacity to assist them.

Adieu. The weather has become exceeding hot. The thermometer is at 80. Ever yours.

LETTER XXXIII.

Palermo, July 24.

IN the course of our acquaintance with some gentlemen of sense and observation in this place, we have learned many things concerning the island, that perhaps may be worthy of your attention; and this day is so hot that I cannot go out, I shall endeavour to recollect some of them, both for your amusement, and my own. The thermometer is up at 81½.—So you may judge of the situaton of our northern constitutions.

There is one thing, however, that I have always observed in these southern climates; that although the degree of heat is much greater than with us, yet it is not commonly attended with that weight and oppression

of spirits that generally accompany our sultry days in summer.—I am sure, that in such a day as this, in England, we should be panting for breath; and no mortal would think either of reading or writing.—That is not the case here; I never was in better spirits in my life: indeed I believe the quantities of ice we eat may contribute a good deal towards it; for I find, that in a very violent heat, there is no such cordial to the spirits as ice, or a draught of ice-water: it is not only from the cold it communicates, but, like the cold bath, from the suddenness of that communication, it braces the stomach, and gives a new tone to the fibres.—It is strange that this piece of luxury (in my opinion the greatest of all and perhaps the only healthy one) should still be so much neglected with us.

I knew an English lady at Nice, who in a short time was cured of a threatening consumption, only by a free indulgence in the use of ices; and I am persuaded, that in skilful hands, few remedies would be more effectual in many of our stomach and inflammatory complaints, as hardly any thing has a stronger or more immediate effect upon the whole frame; and surely our administering of warm drinks and potions in these complaints tend often to nourish the disease.—It is the common practice here, in inflammatory fevers, to give quantities of ice-water to drink; nay, so far have they carried it, that Dr Sanghes, a celebrated Sicilian physician, covered over the breast and belly of his patients with snow or ice; and they assure us, in many cases, with great success.—But indeed I ought in justice to add, that this physician's practice has not been generally adopted.

Perhaps it is from the present benefit I find from ice, that I have said so much in favour of it; for I am fully persuaded, that if I had not a quantity of it standing

here below the table, I should very soon be obliged to give up writing, and go to bed; but whenever I begin to flag, another glass is sure to set me to rights again.

I was going to give you some account of the fisheries of this island.

The catching the tunny-fish constitutes one of the principal Sicilian amusements during the summer-months; and the curing and sending them to foreign markets makes one of the greatest branches of their commerce.—We were invited yesterday by the Prince Sperlinga to a party of tunny-fishing; but the violence of the heat prevented it.

These fish do not make their appearance in the Sicilian seas till towards the latter end of May; at which time, the *Tonnaros*, as they call them, are prepared for their reception. This is a kind of aquatic castle, formed, at a great expence, of strong nets, fastened to the bottom of the sea, by anchors and heavy leaden weights.

These tonnaros are erected in the passages amongst the rocks and islands that are most frequented by the tunny-fish. They take care to shut up with nets the entry into these passages, all but one little opening, which is called the outward gate of the tonnaro. This leads into the first apartment, or, as they call it, the hall. As soon as the fish have got into the hall, the fishermen, who stand sentry in their boats during the season, shut the outer door, which is no more than letting down a small piece of net, which effectually prevents the tunny from returning by the way they came. They then open the inner door of the hall, which leads to the second apartment, which they call the anti-chamber, and, by making a noise on the surface of the water, they soon drive the tunny-fish into it. As soon as the whole

have got into the anti-chamber, the inner door of the hall is again shut, and the outer door is opened for the reception of more company.

Some tonnaros have a great number of apartments, with different names to them all; the saloon, the parlour, the dining-room, &c. but the last apartment is always styled *la Camera della Morte*, the chamber of death: this is composed of stronger nets and heavier anchors than the other.

As soon as they have collected a sufficient number of tunny-fish, they are driven from all the other apartments into the chamber of death: when the slaughter begins. The fishermen, and often the gentlemen too, armed with a kind of spear or harpoon, attack the poor defenceless animals on all sides; which now giving themselves up to despair, dash about with great force and agility, throwing the water over all the boats; and tearing the nets to pieces; they often knock out their brains against the rocks or anchors, and sometimes even against the boats of their enemies.

You see there is nothing very generous or manly in this sport.—The taking of the *Pesce Spada*, or sword-fish, is a much more noble diversion: no art is made use of to ensnare him; but with a small harpoon, fixed to a long line, they attack him in the open seas, and will often strike him at a very considerable distance. It is exactly the whale fishing in miniature. The Sicilian fishermen (who are abundantly superstitious) have a great sentence which they make use of as a charm to bring him near their boats. This is the only bait they use, and they pretend that it is of wonderful efficacy, and absolutely obliges him to follow them; but if unfortunately he should overhear them speak a word of

Italian, he plunges under water immediately, and will appear no more.

As these fish are commonly of a great size and strength, they will sometimes run for hours after they are struck, and afford excellent sport.—I have seen them with a sword four or five feet long, which gives them a formidable appearance in the water, particularly after they are wounded. The flesh of these animals is excellent; it is more like beef than fish, and the common way of dressing it is in steaks.

The fishing of the *pesce spada* is most considerable in the sea of Messina, where they have likewise great quantities of eels, particularly the *Morena*, so much esteemed amongst the Romans, which I think is indeed the finest fish I ever eat.

But it is not only their large fish that they strike with harpoons; they have the same method of taking mullet, dories, a kind of mackarel, and many other species; but this is always performed in the night. As soon as it is dark, two men get into a small boat; one of them holds a lighted torch over the surface of the water, the other stands with his harpoon ready poised in his hand. The light of the torch soon brings the fish to the surface, when the harpooner immediately strikes them. I have seen great quantities killed in this manner, both here and at Naples. A large fleet of boats employed in this kind of fishing make a beautiful appearance on the water, in a fine summer night.

The coral fishery is chiefly practised at Trapani; they have invented a machine there, which answers the purpose much beyond their expectations. This is only a great cross of wood, to the centre of which is fixed a heavy hard stone, capable of carrying the cross to

the bottom. Pieces of small net are tied to each limb of the cross, which is poised horizontally by a rope, and let down into the water. As soon as they feel it touch the bottom, the rope is made fast to the boat. They then row about all over the coral beds; the consequence of which is, the great stone breaks off the coral from the rocks, and it is immediately entangled in the nets.—Since this invention the coral fishery has turned out to considerable account.

The people of Trapani are esteemed the most ingenious of the island; they are the authors of many useful and ornamental inventions. An artist there has lately discovered a method of making Cameios, which are a perfect imitation of the ancient ones engraved on the onyx. They are done on a kind of hard shell from pastes of the best antiques, and so admirably executed, that it is often difficult to distinguish the ancient from the modern. These set in gold are generally worn as bracelets, and are at present in high estimation amongst the ladies of quality here. Mrs Hamilton* procured a pair of them last year, and carried them to Naples, where they have been much admired. Commissions were immediately sent over, and the man has now more business than he can manage: however, we have been fortunate enough to procure a few pair of them for our friends. I have seen cameios that have cost two hundred guineas, that could scarce be distinguished from one of these.

The difficulties under which the poor Sicilians labour, from the extreme oppression of their government, obliges them sometimes to invent branches of commerce that nature seems to have denied them, as they are not allowed to enjoy those she has bestowed.—The

* Now Lady Hamilton.

sugar cane was very much cultivated in this island, but the duties imposed were so enormous, that it has been almost abandoned.—But their crops of wheat alone, were they under a free government, would soon be sufficient to render this little nation one of the richest and most flourishing in the world; for even in the wretched state of cultivation it is in at present, one good crop, I am told, is sufficient to maintain the island for seven years. You will be a good deal surprised, after this, to hear that the exportation of this commodity has been prohibited for these several years past; at least to all such as are not able to pay most exorbitantly for that privilege. The consequence is, that corn has become a drug. The common price of the Salma, which is two loads, was about thirty-one shillings; at present it is reduced to five shillings and sixpence, and there is a probability that it will still fall lower.

This crop, which has been very abundant, I am told, in many places they have hardly been at the pains to gather in, as there is little probability of this cruel prohibition being removed. The farmers are already ruined, and the ruin of their masters must inevitably follow. This is the method the ministry of Naples, or rather that of Spain, has taken to humble the pride of the Sicilian barons, whose power they pretend is still very extensive, and their jurisdiction absolute; most of them possessing a right of life and death in their own domain. However, there is a probablity that they will soon be obliged to relinquish their privileges. The complaint is universal, and if the ministry persevere in these rigorous measures, there must be either a revolt, or they must soon be reduced to a state of poverty as well as of servitude. I believe, indeed, most of them

would readily embrace any plausible scheme, to shake off their yoke; as in general they appear to be people of great sensibility, with high notions of honour and liberty.

Talking of the natural riches of their island.—Yes, say they, if these were displayed, you would have reason indeed to speak of them. Take a look of these mountains,—they contain rich veins of every metal, and many of the Roman mines still remain;—but to what end should we explore them?—It is not we that should reap the profit.——Nay, a discovery of any thing very rich might possibly prove the ruin of its possessor.—No,—in our present situation the hidden treasures of the island must ever remain a profound secret.—Were we happy enough to enjoy the blessings of your constitution, you might call us rich indeed. Many hidden doors of opulence would then be opened, which now are not even thought of, and we should soon reassume our ancient name and consequence; but at present we are nothing.

This is the language that some of the first people amongst them hold with us. However, they still boast that they retain more of the feudal government than any nation in Europe. The shadow indeed remains, but the substance is gone long ago. It has long been the object of the Bourbon ministry to reduce the power of the barons in every kingdom. Richlieu began the system in France, and it has ever since been prosecuted by his successors; its influence has now spread over the whole of their possesaions in Europe; of which, as this is the most remote, it has likewise been the longest in reaching it.

The foundation of the feudal system was first laid here by the count Rugiero, about the middle of the eleventh century, immediately after he had driven the

Saracens out of the island: He divided Sicily into three parts; the first, by consent of his army, was given to the church; the second he bestowed upon his officers, and the third he reserved for himself.

Of these three branches, or as they call them *Braccios*, (arms), he composed his parliament, the form of which remains the same to this day. The *Braccio Militare* is composed of all the barons of the kingdom, to the number of two hundred and fifty-one, who are still obliged to military service: their chief is the prince Butero, who is hereditary president of the parliament: for in conformity to the genius of the feudal government, some of the great officers are still hereditary. The three archbishops, all the bishops, abbés, priors, and dignified clergy, amounting to near seventy, form the *Braccio Ecclesiastico:* the archbishop of Palermo is their chief. The *Braccio Demaniale* is formed by election, like our house of commons: there are forty-three royal cities, styled *Demaniale*, that have a right to elect members. Every householder had a vote in this election. Their chief is the member for Palermo; who is likewise prætor (or mayor of the city.) He is an officer of the highest rank, and his power is very extensive; inferior only to that of the viceroy; in whose absence, the greatest part of the authority devolves upon him. He has a company of grenadiers for his body guard; and receives the title of excellency.

The prætor, together with six senators, who are styled patricians, have the management of the civil government of the city. He is appointed every year, by the king, or by the viceroy, which is the same thing; for I don't find that the people any longer exercise even the form of giving their votes; so that the

very shadow of liberty has now disappeared as well as the substance.——You may judge of the situation of liberty in a kingdom, where all courts civil and criminal are appointed by regal authority, and where all offices are conferred only by the will of the sovereign, and depend entirely upon his caprice.

I own I feel most sincerely for the Sicilians, who, I think, are possessed of many admirable qualities. But the spirit of every nation must infallibly sink, under an oppressive and tyrannical government. Their spirit, however, has in a great measure kept them free from one branch of tyranny, the most dreadful of all, that of the inquisition. The kings of Spain wanted to establish it in its full force; but the barons, accustomed to exercise despotic government themselves, could not bear the thoughts of becoming slaves to a set of ignorant Spanish priests: and, I believe, they took the only way that was left to avoid it. Every inquisitor that pretended to more zeal than they thought became him, was immediately assassinated; particularly if he presumed to interfere with the conduct or sentiments of the nobility. This soon took off the edge of their zeal, and reduced the holy office to a becoming moderation. However, they are extremely circumspect in their conversation about religious matters; and generally advise strangers to be on their guard, as the power of the inquisition, although considerably reduced, is by no means annihilated.

The laws of Sicily are scattered in a great number of volumes; these the king of Sardinia intended to abridge, and collect into one code, but unfortunately he was not long enough in the island to accomplish this useful work.—But where there is an authority above all laws, laws can be but of little service.

The power of the viceroy is very absolute; he has not only the command of all the military force in the kingdom, but likewise presides with unbounded authority in all civil tribunals; and as he is also invested with the legantine power, his sway is equally great in religious matters.

He has the right of nominating to all the great offices in the kingdom; and confirming of all dignities, both civil and ecclesiastical.

In visiting the prisons, a ceremony which he performs with great pomp twice a-year, he has the power of liberating whatever prisoners he pleases; of reducingor altering their sentences, their crimes and accusations having first been read over to him. Indeed, that there may be some appearance of a regard to law and justice, his counsellor always attends him on these occasions, to mark out the limits of the law.—This is an officer of very high rank, appointed to assist the viceroy in his decisions, where the case may appear intricate or dubious; and always is, or ought to be, one of the ablest lawyers in the island. For the most part, this office has been given to strangers, who are supposed to have no kindred or particular connections here, that in giving their judgment they may be free from all prejudice and partiality. He has free admittance into all courts and tribunals, that he may be the better enabled to give the viceroy an account of their proceedings.

The whole military force of Sicily amounts at present, from what I can learn, to 9500 men, about 1200 of which are cavalry. Many of their cities and fortresses would require a very numerous garrison to defend them; particularly Messina, Syracuse, and Palermo: but indeed the state of their fortifications, as well

as that of their artillery, is such, that (even if they were inclined) they could make but a small defence.

If this island were in the hands of a naval power, I think it is evident that it must command the whole Levant trade. There are several little ports at each end of it, besides the great ones of Trapani, Syracuse, and Messina, which lie pretty near the three angles of the triangle. Whatever ships had passed either of these, the others could be apprised of it in the space of half an hour, by means of signal towers, which the Sicilians have erected all round their island, to warn them against sudden invasions from the Barbary side. These towers are built on every little promontory within sight of each other. Fires are always kept ready for lighting, and a person is appointed to watch at each of them, so that the whole island can be alarmed, they assure us, in the space of an hour.

By the by, we have been witness here of a practice, that appears to be a very iniquitous one, and in the end, I should think, must prove the destruction of our Mediterranean trade. Several ships have put in at this port with English colours, but to our surprise not one Englishman on board. These, I find, they call Bandiere men;—perhaps it is a known practice, although, I own, I was an utter stranger to it. They are very numerous in these seas, and carry on a considerable trade through the whole of the Mediterranean, to the great detriment of our own ships. Most of them belong to Genoa and Sicily, though they pass under the name of Minorquins. They purchase Mediterranean passports, I am told, from some of the governors of our garrisons, which entitles them, during the term specified in these passports, to trade under English colours. I am assured that the number of these

Bandiere men amounts to some hundreds. They have often one or two English sailors on board; or at least some person that speaks the language, to answer when they are challenged. Pray can you tell me if this practice is known in England?

Adieu. The heat has become intolerable, and I am able to write no more;—however, I should not have given it up yet, but my ice is all melted, and I have not the conscience to send out a servant for more: I dare say, you are very glad of it, and wish it had been melted long ago. If this continues, I believe we ourselves shall be melted. The thermometer is above 82, and the heat still seems to increase.—The sea has even become too hot for bathing; and it does not at all refresh us now as it did formerly. Farewel.

LETTER XXXIV.

Palermo, July 26.

WE have now got every thing ready for our departure, and if the wind continues favourable, this is probably the last letter I shall write you from Sicily. However, I had still a great deal more to say, both of the Sicilians and their island, and shall leave them, I assure you, with a good deal of regret.

Two chebecks sailed this morning for Naples. We had the offer of a passage; but had already engaged a little vessel for ourselves.—A young nobleman, the marquis of ——, was shipped off in one of them, with orders never more to set his foot in Palermo. Indeed we are much surprised that his sentence is so mild, as

he has been guilty of a crime which, in catholic countries, is generally punished with the greatest rigour;—no less than the debauching a nun.—He met with the young lady at a bathing-place, about thirty miles from this, where she had been sent from her convent for the recovery of her health; her mother was along with her, but as the two young people were first cousins, and had lived together like brother and sister, the old lady thought there could be no risk in allowing them their wonted familiarity.

The nun soon recovered her health, grew fat, and returned to her convent. This is about six or seven months ago; and it is only a few days since the fatal discovery was made; but alas, it would conceal no longer. He is banished Sicily for life; and his estate, or the greatest part of it, is confiscated. He may think himself happy they have treated him with so much lenity: had his jury been composed of priests and confessors, he must have died, without benefit of clergy; for this is the first mortal sin, for which there is neither atonement nor absolution;—"to lie with a nun, and yet not be in orders."

The punishment of the poor unfortunate girl is not yet determined: however, I am told, it will be a terrible one: probably confinement in a dungeon for seven or eight years, without any company but a skull and a crucifix; and to live all that time upon bread and water. I saw a nun at Portallegre, in Portugal, that had suffered this very punishment for the same crime.

This story has been kept a profound secret, and if we had not been on a very intimate footing with some people here, we never should have heard of it.

The Sicilians still retain some of the Spanish customs, though nothing of their gravity nor taciturnity:

the younger sons of the nobility are styled Don by their christened names, and the daughters Donna; like our appellation of Lord and Lady to the sons and daughters of dukes. The eldest son has commonly the title of count or marquis, but they are not all counts as in France and Germany, where I have seen six counts in one house, and very near twice the number of barons in another.

One of the most common titles here, as well as at Naples, is that of Prince; and although these were only created by Philip II. of Spain, they take rank of all the other nobility, some of whom, particularly the counts, carry their origin as far back as the time of the Normans, and look with great contempt on these upstart princes. The dukes and marquises are not so old: the first were created by Charles V. and the second, though an inferior title, by King Alphonso, in the fifteenth century.—So that the dignity of the Sicilian titles may be said to be in the inverse ratio of their antiquities.

The luxury of the people here, like that of the Neapolitans, consists chiefly in their equipages and horses; but by a wise law of the King of Sardinia, which I am surprised should still remain in force, the viceroy alone is allowed to drive in the city with six horses; the prætor, the archbishop, and president of the parliament with four, all the rest of the nobility are restricted to two. But this is only within the gates of Palermo; and when they go to the country, there is none of them that drive with less than four: besides, every family of distinction has at least two or three carriages in daily use; for no man of fashion is so unpolite as to refuse his wife a chariot of her own, of which she has the entire command; (without this

the Marino could never subsist), and the upper servants of the first families would be just as much ashamed to be seen on foot as their masters.—We took the liberty to ridicule the folly of this practice:—they allow of its absurdity, and wish to break through it; but who is to lead the way? We even prevailed with some of the young nobility, which I assure you was no small condescension, to walk the streets with us during the illuminations; but even this condescension showed the folly of the prejudice in a stronger light than if they had refused us; for they would not be prevailed on to stir out, till they had sent their servants about ten yards before them, with large wax flambeaux, although the whole city was in a flame of light. You may believe we did not spare them on this occasion; but it was all to no purpose. However, it is possible that we may overlook many customs of our own, that are not less ridiculous; for ridicule for the most part is relative, and depends only on time and place.—Perhaps you may remember the prince of Anamaboo;—I should like to hear the account he would give of the English nation in his own country: for some of our customs struck him in a still more ridiculous light.—Walking out in St James's Park, in the afternoon, he observed one of his acquaintance driving in a phaeton, with four horses. The Prince burst into a violent fit of laughing:—when they asked him what was the matter?—"Vat the devil, (said the Prince in his bad English), has the fellow eat so much dinner that now it takes four horses to carry him?—I rode out with him this morning, and he was then so light, that van little horse ran away with him.—He must either be a great fool or a great glutton."—Another time they insisted on the Prince going to the play.—He went; but he

soon tired of it, and returned to his companions.—"Well, Prince, (said they), what did you see?"—"Vat did I see, (replied he with the utmost contempt), I did see some men playing de fiddle—and some men playing de fool."

I only infer from this, that it is with some degree of caution we should ridicule the customs of other nations: a Sicilian, perhaps, would laugh with as much justice at many of our customs;—that, for instance, of obliging people to drink when they have no inclination to it;—that in the North, of eating Soland geese before dinner, to give them an appetite;—that of physicians and lawyers wearing enormous wigs, and many others that will naturally occur to you, none of which appear in the least ridiculous to the people that practise them; who would no doubt defend them as strenuously as the Sicilians do the necessity of carrying flambeaux before them during the great illumination.—Indeed they have just now given us an admirable specimen of some of our ridicules, in one of their opera-dances, with which we have been a good deal entertained.

I believe I told you that the dancers are lately come from England: they have brought upon the stage many of the capital London characters:—The bucks, the macaronies, the prigs, the cits, and some others still more respectable: these are well supported, and afford a good deal of laughing. But I am interrupted, otherwise I should have given you a more particular account of them. Adieu. The heat is intolerable; and there is no possibility of walking out.—We complain without reason of our own climate; and King Charles's observation I am persuaded was just; "That there is hard-

ly any climate, where, throughout the year, we can have so much exercise in the open air." Ever yours.

LETTER XXXV.

Palermo, July 27.

THE Sicilians are animated in conversation, and their action for the most part is so just and so expressive of their sentiments, that without hearing what is said, one may comprehend the subject of their discourse. We used to think the French and Neapolitans great adepts in this art; but they are much outdone by the Sicilians, both in the variety and justness of their gesticulation.

The origin of this custom they carry so far back as the time of the earliest tyrants of Syracuse, who, to prevent conspiracies, had forbid their subjects, under the most severe penalties, to be seen in parties talking together. This obliged them to invent a method of communicating their sentiments by dumb show, which they pretend has been transmitted from generation to generation ever since.

I think it is not at all improbable that this custom too may have given the first idea of comedy; as we find, that some short time after, Epicarmus, a native of that city, was the author of this invention.

The Sicilians till lately retained a great many foolish and superstitious customs; but particularly in their marriage and funeral ceremonies: it would be tedious to give you an account of all these; some of them are still practised in the wild and mountainous parts of the island.—As soon as the marriage ceremony is perform-

ed, two of the attendants are ready to cram a spoonful of honey into the mouths of the bride and bridegroom; pronouncing it emblematical of their love and union, which they hope will ever continue as sweet to their souls, as that honey is to their palates.—They then begin to throw handfuls of wheat upon them, which is continued all the way to the house of the bridegroom. This is probably the remains of some ancient rite to Ceres, their favourite divinity, and they think it cannot fail of procuring them a numerous progeny:—however, the Sicilian women have no occasion for any charm to promote this, as, in general, they are abundantly prolific even without it. Fazzello gives an account of women having frequently upwards of forty children; and Carrera mentions one who had forty-seven.

The young couple are not allowed to taste of the marriage-feast; this they pretend is to teach them patience and temperance; but when dinner is finished, a great bone is presented to the bridegroom by the bride's father, or one of her nearest relations, who pronounces these words: "*Rodi tu quest' osso*, &c. Pick you this bone, for you have now taken in hand to pick one, which you will find much harder and of more difficult digestion."—Perhaps this may have given rise to the common saying, when one has undertaken any thing arduous or difficult, that "He has got a bone to pick."

The Sicilians, like most other nations in Europe, carefully avoid marrying in the month of May, and look upon such marriages as extremely inauspicious. This piece of superstition is as old, perhaps older, than the time of the Romans, by whose authors it is frequently mentioned; and by whom it has been trans-

mitted to almost every nation in Europe. It is somewhat unaccountable, that so ridiculous an idea, which can have no foundation in nature, should have stood its ground for so many ages.—There are indeed other customs still more trivial, that are not less universal.—That of making April fools on the first day of that month; the ceremony of the cake on Twelfth-night; and some others that will occur to you, of which, no more than this, I have ever been able to learn their origin.

The marriages of the Sicilian nobility are celebrated with great magnificence; and the number of elegant carriages produced on these occasions is astonishing. I wanted to discover when this great luxury in carriages had taken its rise; and have found an account of the marriage of the daughter of one of their viceroys to the duke of Bivona, in the year 1551. It is described by one Elenco, who was a spectator of the ceremony. He says, the ladies as well as gentlemen were all mounted on fine horses, sumptuously caparisoned, and preceded by pages: that there were only three carriages in the city, which were used by invalids who were not able to ride on horseback. These he calls *Carrete*, which word now signifies a little cart.

The Sicilian ladies marry very young, and frequently live to see the fifth or sixth generation. You will expect, no doubt, that I should say something of their beauty.—In general, they are sprightly and agreeable; and in most parts of Italy they would be esteemed handsome.—A Neapolitan or a Roman would surely pronounce them so.—But a Piedmontese would declare them very ordinary:—so indeed would most Englishmen.—Nothing so vague as our ideas of female beauty.

they change in every climate; and the criterion is no where to be found.

> " Ask where's the North?—at York, 'tis on the Tweed,
> In Scotland at the Orcades, and there
> At Nova Zembla, or the Lord knows where."

No two nations,—perhaps no two men, have affixed precisely the same characteristics; and every one exalts his idea of it, according to the beauty of the woman he is accustomed to see; so that even the same person may sometimes appear beautiful, sometimes ugly, just in proportion as we have seen others that are more or less so.—I remember, after making the tour of Savoy and the Lower Valais, every woman we met in Switzerland appeared an angel. The same thing happens in travelling through some parts of Germany; and you will easily recollect the surprising difference betwixt a beauty at Milan and one at Turin, although these places lie adjacent to each other.—It is a pity that the Juno of Zeuxis has been lost, if it were no more than to have shewn us the notion the ancients had of a perfect beauty.—Indeed, the Venus of Medicis has been considered as a model of perfection,—but it is surely absurd; —for who ever heard of a perfect beauty of five feet high!—the very idea is ridiculous; and whatever figure her goddesship might make amongst the ancient divinities, in the Pantheon at Rome, I am afraid she would cut but a very sorry one amongst the modern ones, in that of London.—In short, I believe we may safely conclude, that beauty is a relative quality, and the *To kalon* is no longer the same, no more in a physical than a moral sense, in any two places on the globe.

The ladies here have remarkably fine hair, and they understand how to dress and adorn it to the greatest advantage. It is now only used as an embellishment; but in former times, we are told, that, like that of Sampson, it was found to be the strength and protection of their country.—There is a paradox for you, that all the wise men of the East could hardly solve.—Their historians relate, (in whose reign I believe is rather dubious), that this city had suffered a long siege from the Saracens, and was greatly reduced by famine; but, what distressed them still more, there were no materials to be found for making bowstrings, and they were on the point of surrendering.—In this dilemma, a patriotic dame stepped forth, and proposed to the women, that the whole of them should cut off their hair, and twist it into bowstrings: This was immediately complied with. The heroism of the women, you know, must ever excite that of the men.—The besieged, animated by this gallant sacrifice of the fair, renewed their defence with such vigour, that the assailants were beat off; and a reinforcement soon after arriving, the city was saved.—The ladies still value themselves upon this story, which you may believe has not been forgotten by their bards.—"The hair of our ladies (says one of their quaint poets) is still employed in the same office; but now it discharges no other shafts but those of Cupid; and the only cords it forms are the cords of love."

The Sicilians are much fonder of study than their neighbours on the continent: and their education is much more attended to. We were a good deal surprised to find, that instead of that frivolity and nothingness, which so often constitute the conversation of the Italian nobility, here their delight was to talk on sub-

jects of literature, of history, of politics, but chiefly of poetry; for the other branches of knowledge and science are only general: this is the only one that may be said to be universal. Every person, in some period of his life, is sure to be inspired; and a lover is never believed so long as he can speak of his passion in prose; and, contrary to our way of reasoning, is only reckoned true in proportion as he is poetical. Thus, inspiration, you see, has here become the test of truth.

We were astonished on our first arrival at Palermo, to hear ourselves addressed in English by some of the young nobility; but still more so, to find them intimately acquainted with many of our celebrated poets and philosophers,—Milton, Shakespeare, Dryden, Pope, Bacon. Bolingbroke we found in several libraries, not in the translation, but generally in the best editions of the original.

Our language, indeed, has become so much in vogue, that it is now looked upon as no immaterial part of a polite education: the viceroy, the marquis Fogliano, a man of great merit and humanity, has made some of our authors his favourite study, and greatly encourages the progress it is making in his kingdom. Many of the nobility speak it a little; and some of them even with ease and fluency, although they have never been out of their island; the Marquis Natali, the Counts Statela and Buschemi, the Duke of St Micheli, &c. in whose company we have enjoyed a great deal of pleasure, and whose knowledge and erudition is the least part of their praise. Adieu.

LETTER XXXVI.

Palermo, July 28.

I HAD almost forgot to say any thing of the opera:—It would have been very ungrateful, for we have been very much delighted with it. The first and second man are both admirable singers, and I make no doubt you will have them in London in a few years; neither of them are as yet known, and I daresay at present they might be engaged for a very moderate price; but in Italy they will soon be taught to estimate their value.—The name of the first is Pacherotti; he is very young, and an entire stranger in the musical world: yet I am persuaded, that after he has been heard on the different theatres in Italy, he will be esteemed one of their capital performers. His excellence is the pathetic, at present too much neglected on most theatres; and indeed, I think, he gives more expression to his *cantabile* airs, and makes his hearers feel more, because he feels more himself than any that I have seen in Italy. He indeed addresses himself to the heart, while most of the modern performers sing only to the fancy.

The first woman is Gabrieli; who is certainly the greatest singer in the world: and those that sing on the same theatre with her, must be capital, otherwise they never can be attended to. This indeed has been the fate of all the other performers, except Pacherotti; and he too gave himself up for lost, on hearing her first performance.—It happened to be an air of execution, exactly adapted to her voice, which she exerted in so astonishing a manner, that before it was half done, poor

Pacherotti burst out a-crying, and ran in behind the scenes; lamenting that he had dared to appear on the same stage with so wonderful a singer; where his small talents must not only be lost, but where he must ever be accused of a presumption, which he hoped was foreign to his character.

It was with some difficulty they could prevail on him to appear again, but from an applause well merited, both from his talents and his modesty, he soon began to pluck up a little courage; and in the singing of a tender air, addressed to Gabrieli in the character of a lover, even she herself, as well as the audience, is said to have been moved.

Indeed in these very pathetic pieces, I am surprised that the power of the music does not sometimes altogether overcome the delusion of character; for when you are master of the language, and allow the united power of the poetry, the action, and the music, to have its full force on the mind, the effect is wonderfully great.—However I have never heard that this happened completely but once; and it was no less a singer than Farinelli that produced it.—He appeared in the character of a young captive hero, and in a tender air was soliciting mercy for his mistress and himself, of a stern and cruel tyrant who had made them his prisoners. The person that acted the tyrant was so perfectly overcome by the melting strains of Farinelli, that instead of refusing his request as he ought to have done, he entirely forgot his character, burst into tears, and caught him in his arms.

The performance of Gabrieli is so generally known and admired, that it is needless to say any thing to you on that subject. Her wonderful execution and volubi-

lity of voice have long been the admiration of Italy, and has even obliged them to invent a new term to express it; and would she exert herself as much to please as to astonish, she might almost perform the wonders that have been ascribed to Orpheus and Timotheus; but it happens, luckily perhaps for the repose of mankind, that her caprice is, if possible, even greater than her talents, and has made her still more contemptible than these have made her celebrated. By this means, her character has often proved a sufficient antidote, both to the charms of her voice and those of her person, which are indeed almost equally powerful; but if these had been united to the qualities of a modest and an amiable mind, she must have made dreadful havock in the world. However, with all her faults, she is certainly the most dangerous syren of modern times, and has made more conquests, I suppose, than any one woman breathing.

It is but justice to add, that contrary to the generality of her profession, she is by no means selfish or mercenary, but, on the contrary, has given many singular proofs of generosity and disinterestedness. She is very rich; from the bounty, as is supposed, of the last emperor, who was fond of having her at Vienna; but she was at last banished that city, as she has likewise been most of those in Italy, from the broils and squabbles that her intriguing spirit, perhaps still more than her beauty, had excited. There are a great many anecdotes concerning her, that would not make an unentertaining volume; and, I am told, either are, or will soon be published.

Although she is considerably upwards of thirty, on the stage she scarcely appears to be eighteen; and this

art of appearing young, is none of the most contemptible that she possesses.—When she is in good humour, and really chooses to exert herself, there is nothing in music that I have ever heard, to be compared to her performance; for she sings to the heart as well as the fancy, when she pleases; and she then commands every passion with unbounded sway. But she is seldom capable of exercising these wonderful powers; and her caprice and her talents exerting themselves by turns, have given her, all her life, the singular fate of becoming alternately an object of admiration and of contempt.

Her powers in acting and reciting, are scarcely inferior to those of her singing; sometimes, a few words in the recitative, with a simple accompaniment only, produce an effect, that I have never been sensible of from any other performer; and inclines me to believe what Rousseau advances on this branch of music, which with us is so much despised. She owes much of her merit to the instructions she received from Metastasio, particularly in acting and reciting; and he allows that she does more justice to his operas than any other actress that ever attempted them.

Her caprice is so fixed and so stubborn, that neither interest, nor flattery, nor threats, nor punishments, have the least power over it; and it appears, that treating her with respect or contempt have an equal tendency to increase it.

It is seldom that she condescends to exert these wonderful talents; but most particularly if she imagines that such an exertion is expected. And instead of singing her airs as other actresses do, for the most part she only hums them over, *a mezza voce*. And no art whatever is capable of making her sing, when she does not choose it.

The most successful expedient has ever been found, to prevail on her favourite lover, for she always has one, to place himself in the centre of the pit, or the front box; and if they are in good terms, which is seldom the case, she will address her tender airs to him, and exert herself to the utmost.—Her present enamorato promised to give us this specimen of his power over her: he took his place accordingly; but Gabrieli, probably suspecting the contrivance, would take no notice of him; so that even this expedient does not always succeed.

The viceroy, who is fond of music, has tried every method to no purpose. Some time ago he gave a great dinner to the principal nobility of Palermo, and sent an invitation to Gabrieli to be of the party. Every other person arrived at the hour of invitation. The viceroy ordered dinner to be kept back, and sent to let her know that the company waited her. The messenger found her reading in bed;—she said she was sorry for having made the company wait, and begged he would make her apology, but that really she had entirely forgot her engagement.

The viceroy would have forgiven this piece of insolence, but, when the company came to the opera, Gabrieli repeated her part with the most perfect negligence and indifference, and sung all her airs in what they call *sotto voce*, that is, so low, that they can scarcely be heard. The viceroy was offended; but as he is a good tempered man, he was loth to make use of authority; but at last, by a perseverance in this insolent stubbornness, she obliged him to threaten her with punishment in case she any longer refused to sing.

On this she grew more obstinate than ever, declaring that force and authority should never succeed with her;

that he might make her cry, but that he never could make her sing. The viceroy then sent her to prison, where she remained twelve days. During which time she gave magnificent entertainments every day: paid the debts of all the poor prisoners, and distributed large sums in charity. The viceroy was obliged to give up struggling with her, and she was at last set at liberty amidst the acclamations of the poor.—Luckily for us, she is at present in good humour, and sometimes exerts herself to the utmost of her power.

She says she has several times been on terms with the managers of our opera, but thinks she shall never be able to pluck up resolution enough to go to England. What do you think is her reason?—It is by no means a bad one. She says she cannot command her caprice; but, for the most part, that it commands her; and that there, she could have no opportunity of indulging it: —For, says she, were I to take it into my head not to sing, I am told the people there would certainly mob me, and perhaps break my bones;—now I like to sleep in a sound skin, although it should even be in a prison. —She alleges too, that it is not always caprice that prevents her from singing; but that it often depends upon physical causes; and this, indeed, I can readily believe: for that wonderful flexibility of voice that runs with such rapidity and neatness through the most minute divisions, and produces almost instantaneously so great a variety of modulation, must surely depend on the very nicest tone of the fibres. And if these are in the smallest degree relaxed, or their elasticity diminished; how is it possible that their contractions and expansions can so readily obey the will, as to produce these effects?—The opening of the glottis, which forms

the voice, is extremely small, and in every variety of tone, its diameter must suffer a sensible change; for the same diameter must ever produce the same tone:—So wonderfully minute are its contractions and dilatations, that Dr Keil, I think, computes, that in some voices, its opening, not more than the tenth of an inch, is divided into upwards of 1200 parts, the different sound of every one of which is perceptible to an exact ear. Now, what a nice tension of fibres must this require! —I should imagine every the most minute change in the air, must cause a sensible difference, and that in our foggy climate, the fibres would be in danger of losing this wonderful sensibility; or at least, that they would often be put out of tune. It is not the same case with an ordinary voice; where the variety of divisions run through, and the volubility with which they are executed bear no proportion to those of Gabrieli.

One of the ballets of our opera, is a representation of Vauxhall gardens, and this is the third time I have seen Vauxhall brought upon the Italian theatre; at Turin, at Naples, and here. The gardens are well represented, and an idea must have been given by some person that had been on the spot. A variety of good English figures are brought in: some with large frizzled wigs sticking half a yard out behind their necks; some with little cut scratches, that look extremely ridiculous. Some come in cracking their whips, with buckskin breeches and jockey caps. Some are armed with great oaken sticks; their hair tied up in enormous clubs, and stocks that swell their necks to double its natural size. But what affords the principal part of the entertainment is, three quakers who are duped by three ladies of the town, in concert with three jack tars;

their lovers.—These characters, as you may believe, are much exaggerated, though, upon the whole, they are supported with humour, and have afforded us a good deal of laughing; however, we were hurt to see the respectable character of quakers turned into such ridicule; and as the people here were altogether unacquainted with it, we have been at some pains to explain to them the simplicity and purity of their manners, and the incorruptible integrity of their principles.

Although the Sicilians in general are a good sort of people, and seem to be endowed with a large share of philanthropy and urbanity; yet it must be owned they have no great affection for their neighbours on the continent; and indeed the dislike is altogether reciprocal.—It is somewhat singular; I am afraid not much for the honour of human nature; that through all Europe, the two neighbouring nations have a perpetual jarring with each other.—I could heartily wish that we had been an exception from this rule; but I am sorry to see, from our newspapers, which are sent to the nobility of this city, that at present we are rather the most distinguished for it; at least our animosities, if there really are any, make by much the greatest noise of all.—We have often been asked by foreigners what was the ground of the mighty quarrel, that such torrents of the most illiberal abuse have been poured out by a people so celebrated for liberality of sentiment; and it is with difficulty we can persuade them, that although from the papers this sometimes appears to be the voice of the nation, yet in fact it is only confined to a set of the most worthless and despicable incendiaries; like him who set the house in a flame, on pur-

pose to pilfer during the conflagration.—But the abuse that is levelled at the king, surprises them more than all the rest: and you cannot conceive their amazement and indignation when we assured them, that notwithstanding all this, he was the most virtuous and benevolent prince on earth.—Then, exclaimed a Sicilian nobleman, you must certainly be the most damnable people on the globe.—I was a good deal struck with the suddenness of the charge; and it was not without many explanations of the liberty of our constitution, and particularly that of the press, that I could prevail with him to retract his sentiments, and think more favourably of us.—Still he insisted, that so egregious an abuse of this liberty, was only a farther proof of his position; and that there must be something essentially wrong in a nation that could allow of such abuse levelled at the most sacred of all characters: the highest virtue united to the highest station. We assured him that what he heard, was only the voice of the most abandoned and profligate wretches in the nation; who, taking advantage of the great freedom of the press, had often made these newspapers the vehicles of the most detestable sedition: That both the king and queen were beloved by all their subjects, at least by all those of worth;—that they never were spoken of but as the most perfect model of conjugal union and happiness, as well as of every social endowment; and that they could have no enemies, but the enemies of virtue.

However, after all, we could but patch up a peace with him. He could not comprehend (he said) how the voice of a few incendiaries should be louder than the general voice of the nation.—We told him, that people who were pleased commonly held their tongue;

and that sedition and libel ever made a greater noise than panegyric; just as the fire-bell is rung louder, and is more listened to than the bell for rejoicing.

Adieu. Our pilot says the wind is not fair, so that possibly we may still stay a day or two longer. Ever yours.

LETTER XXXVII.

Palermo, July 29.

WERE I to enter upon the natural history of this island, it would lead me into a vast field of speculation, for which I have neither time nor abilities: however a variety of objects struck us as we travelled along, that it may not be amiss to give you some little account of.—There are a variety of mineral waters, almost through the whole of Sicily. Many of these are boiling hot; others still more singular, are of a degree of cold superior to that of ice, and yet never freeze.

In several places, they have fountains that throw up a kind of oil on their surface, which is of great use to the peasants, who burn it in their lamps, and use it to many other purposes; but there is still a more remarkable one near Nicosia, which is called *Il fonte Canalotto.* It is covered with a thick scum of a kind of pitch, which, amongst the country people, is esteemed a sovereign remedy in rheumatic, and many other complaints.

The water of a small lake near Naso is celebrated for dyeing black every thing that is put into it; and

this it is said to perform without the mixture of any other ingredient, although the water itself is remarkably pure and transparent.

They have a variety of sulphureous baths, like those near Naples, where the patient is thrown into a profuse sweat, only from the heat of the vapour. The most celebrated are those of Sciaccia, and on the mountain of Cologero; not in the neighbourhood of Ætna, as I expected, but at a great distance from that mountain. But, indeed, I am much inclined to believe, that not only Mount Ætna, but the greatest part of Sicily, and almost the whole of the circumjacent islands, have been originally formed by subterraneous fire; but I shall have an opportunity of speaking more largely on this subject, when I give you an account of the country round Naples.

I have observed lava, pumice, and tufa, in many parts of Sicily, at a great distance from Ætna; and there are a variety both of mountains and valleys that still emit a hot vapour, and produce springs of boiling water.

About a mile and a half to the west of this city, at a small beach where we often go a-swimming, there are many springs of warm water, that rise even within the sea at the depth of five or six feet. We were at first a good deal surprised to find ourselves almost instantaneously both in the hot and cold bath; for at one stroke we commonly passed through the hot water, which only extends for a few feet around the spring. It gave us a momentary glow, and produced a very odd uncouth sensation, by no means an agreeable one. I mentioned this singularity to several gentlemen here, who tell me they have observed the same thing.

Not a great way from this is a celebrated fountain, called *Il Mar Dolce*, where there are some remains of an ancient naumachia; and in the neighbourhood above it, they shew you a cavern, where a gigantic skeleton is said to have been found: however, it fell to dust when they attempted to remove it:—Fazzello says, its teeth were the only part that resisted the impression of the air; that he procured two of them, and that they weighed near two ounces.—There are many such stories to be met with in the Sicilian legends, as it seems to be an universal belief, that this island was once inhabited by giants; but although we have made diligent inquiry, we have never been able to procure a sight of any of these gigantic bones which are said to be still preserved in many parts of the island. Had there been any foundation for this, I think it is probable they must have found their way into some of the museums; but this is not the case; nor indeed have we met with any person of sense and credibility that could say they had seen any of them. We had been assured at Naples, that an entire skeleton, upwards of ten feet high, was preserved in the museum of Palermo; but there is no such thing there, nor I believe any where else in the island.—This museum is well furnished both with antiques and articles of natural history, but is not superior to what we have seen in many other places.

The number of souls in Palermo are computed at about 150,000. Those of the whole island, by the last numeration, amounted to 1,123,163; of which number there are about 50,000 that belong to the different monasteries and religious orders. The number of houses are computed at 268,120, which makes betwixt five and six to a house.

The great standing commodity of Sicily, which has ever constituted the riches of the island, was their crops of wheat; but they cultivate many other branches of commerce, though none that could bear any proportion to this, were it under a free government, and exportation allowed. Their method of preserving their grain will appear somewhat singular to our farmers: instead of exposing it, as we do, to the open air, they are at the greatest pains to exclude it entirely from it.—In many places, where the soil is dry, particularly near Agrigentum, they have dug large pits of cave in the rock. These open by a small hole at top, and swell to a great width below; here they pour down their grain, after it has been made exceedingly dry; and ramming it hard, they cover up the hole, to protect it from rain; and they assure us it will preserve in this manner for many years.

The Soda is a plant which is much cultivated, and turns out to considerable account. This is the vegetable, that by the action of fire, is afterwards converted into mirrors and crystals. Great quantities of it are sent every year to supply the glass-houses at Venice.—They have likewise a considerable trade in liquorice, rice, figs, raisins, and currants, the best of which grow amongst the extinguished volcanoes of the Lipari Islands. Their honey is, I think, the highest flavoured I have ever seen; in some parts of the island even superior to that of Minorca: this is owing, no doubt, to the quantity of aromatic plants, with which this beautiful country is every where overspread. This honey is gathered three months in the year; July, August, and October. It is found by the peasants in the hollows of trees and rocks; and is esteemed of a supe-

rior quality to that produced under the tyranny of man. —The country of the lesser Hybla is still, as formerly, the part of the island that is most celebrated for honey. The Count Statela made us a present of some of it, gathered on his brother the Prince of Spaccaforno's estate, which lies near the ruins of that city.

Sugar is now no article of the Sicilian commerce, though a small quantity of it is still manufactured for home consumption; but the plantations of the sugar-cane, I am told, thrive well in several parts of the island.

The juice of liquorice is prepared both here and in Calabria, and is sent to the northern countries of Europe, where it is used for colds.—The juice is squeezed out of the roots; after which it is boiled to a consistency, and formed into cakes, which are packed up with bay leaves in the same order that we receive them.

In some of the northern parts of the island, I am told, they find the shell-fish that produces a kind of flax, of which gloves and stockings are made; but these too are found in greater quantities in Calabria.

Their plantations of oranges, lemons, bergamots, almonds, &c. produce no inconsiderable branch of commerce. The pistachio-nut too is much cultivated in many parts of the island, and with great success. These trees, like many others, are male and female: the male is called *Scornobecco*, and is always barren; but unless a quantity of these are mixed in every plantation, the pistachio-tree never bears a nut.—But of all the variety that is cultivated in Sicily, the manna-tree is esteemed the most profitable; it resembles the ash, and is, I believe, of that species. About the beginning

of August, during the season of the greatest heat, they make an incision in the bark, near to the root of the tree; a thick whitish liquor is immediately discharged from the wound, which soon hardens in the sun, when it is carefully taken off and gathered into boxes. They renew these incisions every day during the season, observing, however, only to wound one side of the tree; the other side they reserve for the summer following.

The cantharides-fly is a Sicilian commodity; it is found on several trees of Ætna, whose juice is supposed to have a corrosive or abstersive quality, particularly the pine and the fig tree; and I am told the cantharides of Mount Ætna are reckoned preferable to those of Spain.

The marbles of Sicily would afford a great source of opulence, were there any encouragement to work the quarries: of these they have an infinite variety, and of the finest sorts. I have seen some of them little inferior to the giall and verd antique, that is now so precious. The beautiful yellow columns you must have observed in the royal chapel of Casserto are of the first kind. They have likewise some that very much resemble lapis lazuli and porphyry.

At Centorbi they find a kind of soft stone that dissolves in water, and is used in washing instead of soap, from which property it is called *Pietra Saponaro*. They likewise find here, as well as in Calabria, the celebrated stone, which, upon being watered and exposed to a pretty violent degree of heat, produces a plentiful crop of mushrooms:—But it would be endless to give you an account of all the various commodities and curious productions of this island; Ætna alone affords a great

er number than many of the most extensive kingdoms, and is no less an epitome of the whole earth in its soil and climate, than in the variety of its productions.—Besides the corn, the wine, the oil, the silk, the spice, and delicious fruits of its lower region; the beautiful forests, the flocks, the game, the tar, the cork, the honey, of its second; the snow and ice of its third; it affords from its caverns a variety of mineral and other productions; cinnabar, mercury, sulphur, allum, nitre, and vitriol; so that this wonderful mountain at the same time produces every necessary and every luxury of life.

Its first region covers their tables with all the delicacies that the earth produces; its second supplies them with game, cheese, butter, honey; and not only furnishes wood of every kind for building their ships and houses, but likewise an inexhaustible store of excellent fuel; and as the third region, with its ice and snow, keeps them fresh and cool during the heat of summer, so this contributes equally to keep them warm and comfortable during the cold of winter.

Thus you see, the variety of climates is not confined to Ætna itself; but, in obedience to the voice of man, descends from that mountain; and, mingling the violence of their extremes, diffuses the most benign influences all over the island, tempering each other to moderation, and softening the rigours of every season.

We are not then to be surprised at the obstinate attachment of the people to this mountain, and that all his terrors have not been able to drive them away from him: for although he sometimes chastises, yet, like an indulgent parent, he mixes such blessings along with his chastisements, that their affections can never be

estranged; for at the same time that he threatens with a rod of iron, he pours down upon them all the blessings of the age of gold.

Adieu. We are now going to pay our respects to the viceroy, and make our farewell visits.—This ceremony never fails to throw a damp on my spirits; but I have seldom found it so strong as at present, there being little or no probability that we shall ever see again a number of worthy people we are just now going to take leave of; or that we shall ever have it in our power to make any return for the many civilities we have received from them.

Farewell. The wind we are told is fair, and I shall probably be the bearer of this to the continent, from whence you may soon expect to hear from, &c.

LETTER XXXVIII.

Naples, August 1.

AFTER two days delightful sailing, we have again arrived at this city; where, to our infinite joy, we have found all the worthy friends we had left behind us. This indeed was necessary, to wipe out the impressions which the leaving of Sicily had occasioned. We shall still remain here, at least for three months, till the season of the *Mal Aria* is entirely over. You know the danger of travelling through Campania during that season; which, although it is looked upon by many of our learned doctors as vulgar error, yet we certainly shall not submit ourselves to the experiment.

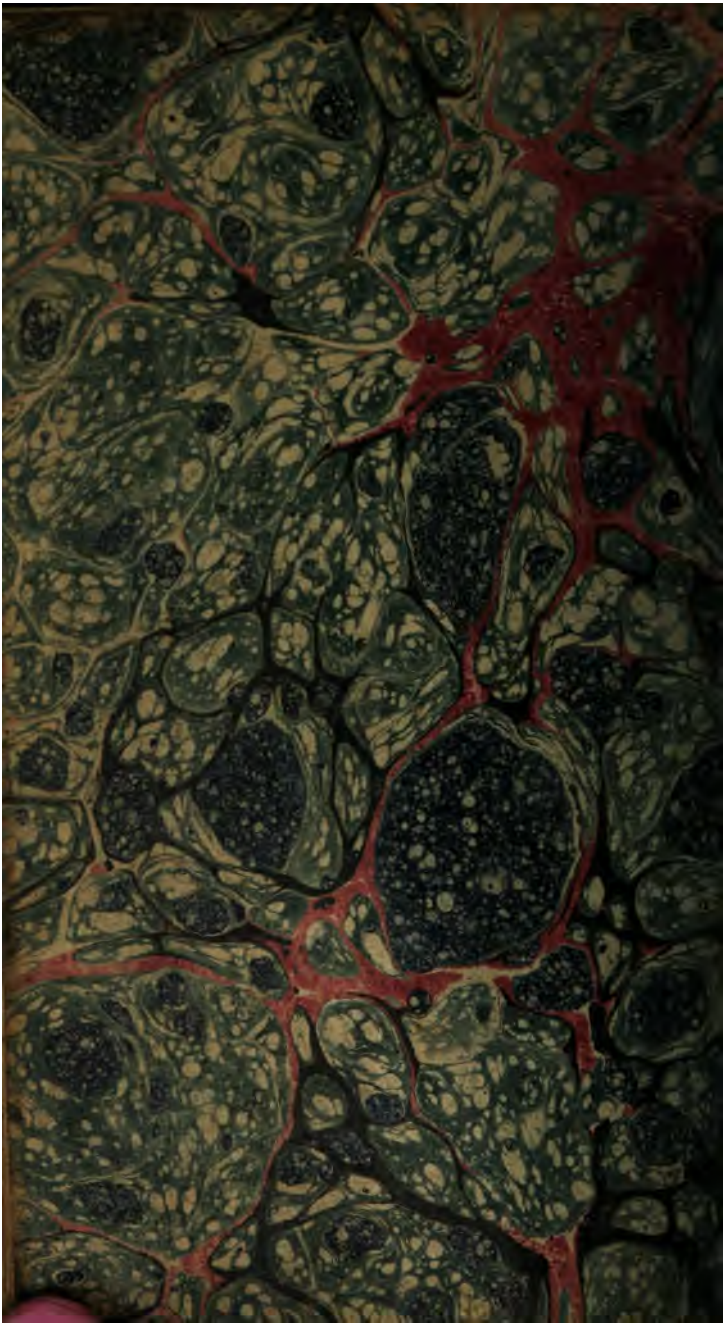
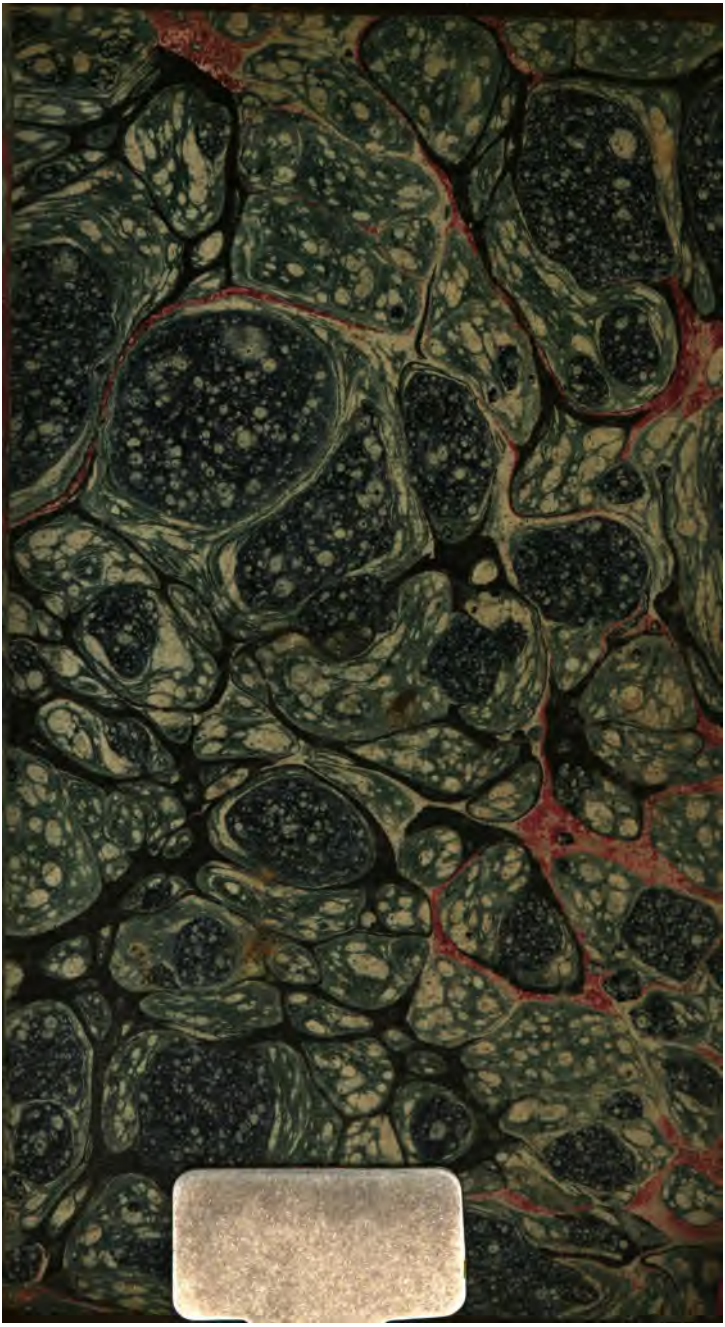
We propose to pass the winter at Rome, where we shall probably find occupation enough for four or five months.—From thence by Loretto, Bologna, &c. to Venice, the old beaten tract.—We shall then leave the parched fields of Italy, for the delightful cool mountains of Switzerland;—where liberty and simplicity, long since banished from polished nations, still flourish in their original purity; where the temperature and moderation of the climate, and that of the inhabitants, are naturally emblematical of each other.—For whilst other nations are scorched by the heat of the sun, and the still more scorching heats of tyranny and superstition; here the genial breezes for ever fan the air, and heighten that alacrity and joy which liberty and innocence alone can inspire;—here the genial flow of the soul has never yet been checked by the idle and useless refinements of art, but opens and expands itself to all the calls of affection and benevolence.—But I must not stop. You know my old attachment to that primitive country.—It never fails to run away with me. We propose then, to make this the scene of our summer pleasures; and by that time, I can foresee, we shall be heartily tired of Art, and shall begin again to languish after Nature. It is she alone that can give any real or lasting pleasure, and in all our pursuits of happiness, if she is not our guide, we never can attain our end.

Adieu, my dear friend. You have been our faithful companion during this tour, and have not contributed a little to its pleasure. If it has afforded equal entertainment to you, we shall beg of you still to accompany us through the rest of our travels. A man must have a miserable imagination indeed, that can be in solitude, whilst he has such friends to converse with; the

consideration of it soon removes the mountains and seas that separate us, and produces those sympathetic feelings, which are the only equivalent for the real absence of a friend; for I never sit down to write, but I see you placed on the opposite side of the table, and suppose that we are just talking over the transactions of the day. And without your presence to animate me, how is it possible that I could have had patience to write these enormous epistles? Adieu. We are soon going to make some excursions through the kingdom of Naples; and if they produce any thing worthy of your observation, we must beg that you will still submit to be one of the party.

I ever am,

Most sincerely and affectionately, yours,

PAT. BRYDONE.

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